



## *Towards a Joint Africa-Europe Partnership Strategy*

### Issue Paper II

# Setting the Agenda

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### ***Background***

1. Africa and Europe have a long history of dialogue that has occurred at many levels and taken many forms. It is only in the last decade, however, as each continent has become more united, and started to project a more unified image to the external world that this dialogue has really taken on the characteristic of a political dialogue between two pan-continental political entities on each side. This newest level of dialogue is thus added on top of the huge variety of existing dialogues at national and sub-regional levels, between official instances and between non state actors. Issue Paper 2 traces the main outlines of this history and brings out the richness and diversity of this dialogue.
2. This official 'continental level' dialogue is now expected to enter a new phase, which builds on this history, but takes it further with the intention of giving new momentum to the collaboration between these two old neighbours. It is hoped that the vision for this future collaboration will be formalised in some form of joint statement or strategy for cooperation at the planned 2<sup>nd</sup> EU-Africa Summit to be held in late 2007 in Lisbon.
3. Since the first EU-Africa Summit in Cairo in 2000 both Africa and Europe have changed. There are new political institutions on both sides of the Mediterranean and a new drive to work together. Times have also changed. Globalisation has moved forward rapidly and we have all become more conscious of our mutual interdependence. Security issues have moved up the agenda since 9/11, but with global agreements like the UN's Millennium Declaration we have also all become more aware and committed to working together to tackle the extremes of poverty and opportunity that divide us. New institutions, new times and new challenges imply the need for new strategies and new solutions, but these must also be built on experience and the lessons learnt in the past if we are to move forward.



## ***The need for a Public Consultation***

4. The AU and EU institutions have thus strengthened and developed their dialogue and now as they approach this 2<sup>nd</sup> Summit it is important for them both to both make it more concrete and to check it with concerned stakeholders on both continents. Hence the need for this public consultation process that will build up over the year ahead, collecting ideas from civil society organisations, other official bodies, parliamentarians, etc. and delivering them to the authorities on each side for inclusion where possible in the officials documents. There will then also be a need to react and comment on the proposals coming out of the official process as it also gathers steam and moves stage by stage towards the Summit. Ideally as the official negotiation moves forward step by step it will be nourished and enriched with ideas from the public consultation, but it will also throw points back to the public domain for more detailed debate and thinking. The joint strategy that emerges from this process should therefore not just be a strategy for officials, but also one to which civil society on both continents can relate, contribute and support in their own work.
  
5. Africa and Europe are also moving closer together as globalisation gathers pace. Many Africans live in Europe and vice versa. There is a constant flow of exchanges at all levels: in trade, academia, information and knowledge flows, tourism, migration, politics, finance, etc. etc. Although there are clearly differences of perspective and divergences of attitude, it is rare that it is really possible to talk about a specific 'African view' or 'European view' on any one subject. Opinions on different subjects also vary hugely within both continents. It is thus more a question of levels of consensus or that a particular point of view is defended by groups of actors on both continents while others on each continent disagree. In other words agreement and disagreement, more often than not, transcend geographical and continental boundaries. All the more important therefore that, as a joint African-European strategy for the development of Africa is constructed, many different views and interests are heard.

## ***Key Issues as a Starting Point for Discussion***

6. The starting point for the consultation is therefore to focus on the four clusters of topics into which officials on both sides have found it most convenient to group the wide variety of issues that are relevant to the collaboration between the two continents and could be included in any joint strategy for cooperation. These are:
  - Peace & Security
  - Governance, Democracy and Human Rights
  - Trade & Regional Integration
  - Key Development Issues



7. This is of course only one possible starting point and very quickly we can expect other issues to come up. The officials themselves will gradually become clearer in the more detailed content they foresee for the strategy and will be able to explain their evolving ideas to the public consultation.
8. There are also existing documents on both sides that cover much of the ground from the point of view of one or other side. The EU, at the official level of the European Council, has already approved a year ago in December 2005, the EU Strategy for Africa. The AU for its part also adopted in the NEPAD document of 2001 a set of proposals for what it expects from international partners. More recently it has formulated strategies for what it seeks to obtain from its dealings with the 'emerging powers' such as China, Brazil and India. There have also been other initiatives to encourage joint reflection between Africans and Europeans such as the Commission for Africa initiative of UK premier Tony Blair in the run-up to the 2005 G8 Summit in Gleneagles. There is thus a solid basis for reflection on both sides in addition to the on-going discussion AU and EU officials have had together in the Cairo process.
9. At other levels EU Member States have cooperation agreements with individual African governments. Civil society organisations, such as NGOs, trade unions or faith based organisations on both continents also agree common cooperation strategies with their respective counterparts. These agreements and strategies can also provide a wealth of ideas from which to build a common strategy for promoting development in Africa. Indeed there is even a question, raised, for instance, by members of African and European civil society, about what is the added value of having a new strategy given the existing documents that already regulate and guide Africa-Europe relations, i.e. the EU Strategy towards Africa and the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. The consultation process should thus also serve to clarify the purpose and value-added of a *joint* Strategy for Africa
10. This wide variety of sources and potential views should however be able to relate relatively easily to the four very broad 'clusters' of the official dialogue. Annexed to the current paper are four notes relating to each of these clusters which identify some of the major current issues that could form the core of the debate. They do not pretend to be comprehensive views of these subject areas, but simply seek to raise a few key issues and questions. They are therefore intended to act as the starting point of the consultation to get the ball rolling.

## ***Differences of Approach among Actors***

11. A wide variety of different topics are likely to be brought forward in the dialogue between Europe and Africa in different ways and with different emphases by different groups of actors. In addition to trying to narrow down the field of discussion to key topics, the consultation and official dialogue will also have to consider divergences of approach. The way each actor involved



will see any one topic will also vary. Similar matters will be viewed through from different angles and this will also lead to variations in the order of priorities.

### **Differences of approach towards one theme among various actors**

12. Similar themes and problems as well as the way to tackle them are perceived in different ways by the various European and African stakeholders. There is often limited disagreement on the substance, but rather divergences over the approach that needs to be taken to various questions. For example:

#### *Economic development or poverty eradication*

13. Few actors involved in the development sector would disagree this is a fundamental agenda point for cooperation between Africa and Europe. Yet if one examines official pronouncements many African documents on the subject tend to emphasize growth and economic development first, whereas Europeans, both official and non-government, often stress the need to focus first and foremost on the eradication of poverty. Thus although Africa's economic development is advocated by both European and African actors as a key priority, it is not always approached from the same angle. The African Union as well as the RECs and African Member States seek to address the economic development of the continent in its entirety, trying to tackle issues such as unemployment, particularly for the large numbers of unemployed African youth, the promotion of growth, infrastructure development, the industrialization of the continent and the avoidance of exportation of unprocessed agricultural and mineral commodities from Africa. On the other hand, the European institutional view of Africa's economic development is far more based on the international consensus on the eradication of poverty and the need to reach the Millennium Development Goals, although there is of course also a willingness to work on other issues as is evident in the recently announced by the EU Partnership for Infrastructure. This is not to say therefore that these two views are opposed, but rather to show that although views on the substance are closely intertwined, the approach to tackle them may differ.

14. Other topics can also illustrate this question of differences of approach to the same issue.

#### *Trade and regional development*

15. In trade at an official level the EU is keen to see the creation of regional free-trade zones in order to stimulate regional trade and growth with the negotiation of Economic Partnership Agreements being a push factor. Africans have long been interested in the potential of regionalization for promoting growth and development but they have reservations over the real value of EPAs to push this regional approach. There are also major divergences of views inside Europe in this area with many NGOs and people in the development sector having serious reservations about the official EU line on EPAs.



### *Migration*

16. The *migration* debate is another example of a topic that is of clear concern to both Europeans and Africans for different reasons. European politicians and officials have to face a debate that is fuelled by high levels of media coverage of migrants crossing the sea to Europe and populist fears of 'foreigners swamping Europe' which leads to strong pressures from public opinion. The debate in Europe thus started from an angle that focussed strongly on security and immigration control issues and only later moved to seeing migration in a more positive way recognising the benefits migrants might bring to Europe and the need to also look at consequences it can have in terms of development on the migrants' countries of origin. In Africa on the other hand the debate has all along been more focused on the causes of migration, the risk of losing capacities in terms of highly qualified human resources ('brain drain') and the strong link to development not only through increased funding but also through assistance towards the creation of further economic opportunities. The results of the recent AU-EU conference on migration and development in Tripoli illustrate these differences of view as well as the middle ground that has been found between both parties.

### *Peace and Security*

17. This is another area where solid common ground among the main stakeholders has largely been found, but where some differences of approaches can still be highlighted. An overriding concern expressed by many Africans in the security debate has been the wish for Africa to handle its security problems itself without systematic involvement of foreign troops on its soil, apart from interventions from the United Nations. The Rwandan genocide was a turning point that convinced many of the need for Africa to build up the capacity to tackle its own security problems so that it would not have to rely on the slow and divided reactions of the international community. Indeed, this has been one of the key motivating forces behind the building up of the AU's capacity in the peace and security sector. Both Africans and Europeans are of course also concerned by the consequences of conflict and security issues in general on African development. In addition however the EU has a specific concern with its own security and wants to see adequate attention paid to conflicts taking place in the regions that border Europe as, if they are left unattended, they can spill over and affect Europe directly. Thus Europe and Africa do not necessarily speak with one voice on such sensitive issues, although they share the same concern with the need to promote peace and stability. These differences of approach have certainly not prevented them from finding good common ground, with for instance the funding of the African Peace Facility from the European Development Fund (EDF).

### *Governance Issues*

18. The good governance debate also shows divergences while there is equally a strong drive to seek out common ground. The approach differs among the various actors. For instance, on rights issues, if Europeans are mobilised by strong lobbies that defend individual human rights, Africans tend to speak more of group or people's rights as clearly illustrated by the very name of the



African Court of Human and People's Rights. Neither Africans nor Europeans would deny the other view, but the angle from which they tend to see the issue differs. The case of Zimbabwe also shows divergences of view on how best to tackle governance issues though all would agree that it is important to end the suffering of ordinary Zimbabweans. Africa is in fact seeking to build up and strengthen its own conception of governance through initiatives at various levels ranging from the African Peer Review mechanism at the pan-African level to more local and decentralized initiatives by a multiplicity of non state actors. In Europe the all-encompassing notion of governance has become an imperative in European relations with third countries while still conflicting with other strategic and economic interests.

### **Prioritization by different actors**

19. The key issues from among the four 'clusters' that AU and EU officials use as their agreed framework for the EU-Africa dialogue will clearly be at the core of the debate around the negotiation of a joint EU-AU Partnership Strategy although priorities may vary. As indicated above, these issues are covered in four separate short annexes to this paper.
20. From an EU point of view the priorities in its partnership with Africa have been expressed in the *EU Strategy for Africa* approved by the European Council of December 2005. It covers all the main themes identified in the four clusters of the EU-Africa dialogue, but it is also an expression of Europe's willingness to establish an overall coherence framework for its relations towards Africa that would serve as a coordination tool among its own institutional actors, that is the European Commission, the Council Secretariat, and the European Member States. This political expression of these institutions willingness to work together in support of a common project is an important feature and asset of this Strategy.
21. On top of these agreed priorities, other issues are strongly emphasized by some key African actors such as the African Union Commission, some Regional Economic Communities or some African States. These issues are also by and large acknowledged by the European Union but they are not always given the same emphasis on the European side. It is worth dwelling briefly on some of the more important among these issues as some of them are fundamental to achieving a common strategy:
  - *Ownership* is a fundamental concern for all African actors in every theme: peace and security, governance and development. It is also a principle regularly acknowledged by the EU and most recently in its Africa Strategy. It is a principle that is part of the international consensus on development cooperation translated through the Paris Declaration for instance. In the African context, this has been a core reason for the creation of the African Union and the NEPAD programme. Africa has also specified on several occasions its desire for a real and balanced partnership with its international partners and no longer a donor-recipient relationship. As one



of the key principles therefore, ownership should apply in a cross cutting manner to all themes covered in the Strategy. However, applying this principle is not always easy for the EU for various reasons, not least because it wants to see progress in development work, make a useful contribution and it needs to account to tax payers for the manner in which ODA is used. This therefore leads to the basic question of:

***How should ownership be addressed in a consistent manner?***

- *How can the EU treat Africa as one?* EU's relations with Africa are influenced by history as well as by various strategic and geopolitical concerns. These links between Europe and Africa are structurally embedded in the EU-Africa relationship and are translated through the existing agreements between the European Union and Africa. Three agreements, that translate into three different financial instruments on the European Community side, define the official relationship between these two continents and reflect the various European priorities with Africa:
  - *The Cotonou Partnership Agreement* between all of sub-Saharan Africa (except South Africa) and the European Union
  - *The Barcelona Process* now translated into the *European Neighborhood Policy* with Northern African countries
  - *The Trade and Development Cooperation Agreement* with South Africa which has recently been complemented by an EU Strategy for South Africa

22. This split is also reflected at the institutional level both within the European Commission, with the division between DG Development dealing with the relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and DG RELEX dealing with relations with Northern Africa. The complex of the general European institutional construct and its numerous actors (Council Secretariat, European Commission, European Member States) further adds to the complexity of the Europe-Africa relationship and also raises the question of the coordination among these various actors. This fractioned relationship is reflected in the various themes and instruments used by the European Community to support the African Union. If the EC has put an emphasis on instruments that can support pan-African perspectives, the different logics and priorities defined in the different agreements remain. The EU Strategy for Africa has been the first attempt to define an overall European Strategy towards Africa. In that sense it is already a response to requests from the AU as voiced for instance by the Commissioner for Peace & Security Said Djinnit who has regularly brought out in his speeches that "Europe likes to look at Africa in a fragmented manner". A key question is thus:



***How can this fragmented Europe-Africa relationship be overcome to enter into a continent to continent relationship as desired by the African Union?***

23. *Overall coherence of EU's relations with Africa.* The European Commission and the Member States all have relations at three institutional levels in Africa: pan-African, sub-regional and national. Various links also exist between different actors in Europe and in Africa: civil society organisations, private sector, faith based organisations, professional institutions, trade unions, local governments etc. All these relationships create a complex setting, the aim of which is not necessarily consistency – since various organisations represent different interests. However it is important to keep in mind this wider picture while triggering the dialogue on the future joint Strategy as well as to examine whether synergies could be improved. Looking at the institutional relationships between European and African actors, questions of consistency and complementarity are raised by African actors. Indeed the relationship between Europe and the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are partly dependant on the EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement) agenda. The programming of the EU support to the African Union and to the RECs is not handled as one exercise but as several which, although attempts are made to overcome this disunity, therefore places obstacles in the way of African partners seeking to achieve a consistent overview on the division of tasks and funding between the AU and the RECs. This is therefore another fundamental question:

***How can the synergies be improved among the various actors and especially in Europe's relationship with the various institutional levels in Africa?***

## **Conclusion**

*As can be seen from the above 'Setting the Agenda' for this public consultation on the formulation of a joint Africa-European strategy for partnership is not a simple straightforward matter. There is a need to understand how the public consultation fits in with the official dialogue and negotiation process, and to understand what the value-added of new joint strategy can be. Once the topic areas have been defined on the basis of what the official process has reached in terms of*



*structuring their dialogue, there is then also a need to recognise that even though they agree on the basic content to be covered, different actors can have different approaches to the same topic and are likely to see a need for a different order of priority.*

*As indicated above the four attached annexes provide a brief and hopefully accessible overview of some of the key issues that can be highlighted in the public discussion at least to off start the consultation.*