



Discussion Note

Governance

Context analysis

Governance is an important component of the EU-Africa dialogue, underpinned by various cooperation agreements (CPA , MEDA, TCDA) and by an expanding set of positive initiatives established by the Africa side (e.g. the APRM) or by the EU (e.g. the Governance Facility). Practice, however, suggests that the partnership on governance could be considerably improved. For instance, the EU-Africa dialogue on governance has tended to be hampered by a lack of a shared vision on dialogue priorities and modalities, leading to inconclusive talks (e.g. with regard to the return of cultural goods), a recurrent ownership deficit on the part of African partners; as well as major political blockages (e.g. on Zimbabwe). Furthermore, Europe is often perceived of pushing its own governance agendas, instruments and criteria rather than supporting (existing) African frameworks, developed at various levels. A growing amount of EU funding is available for governance, but its effective use raises a wide range of challenges (including on how to operate in non-democratic environments or in conflict countries). African civil society and local governments are also seeking to be more fully associated and heard on governance matters. Reciprocity is also a key issue, with the African side insisting on greater mutual accountability.

Key questions

The current dialogue on a joint strategy provides an opportunity to consolidate the foundations of the EU-Africa partnership on governance by addressing the following issues:

1. Is there a shared vision on the strengths and weaknesses of current governance strategies and partnership approaches?

A joint diagnosis provides a good starting point for the dialogue. It invites parties to briefly take stock of past experiences; to assess elements where progress has been made as well as shortcomings/gaps; and to identify key priorities that the new strategy should consider.



2. How can the dialogue on governance be improved?

This may require a focus on guiding principles underpinning the dialogue; a refinement of existing mechanisms and modalities for setting the agenda and conducting the dialogue (including the follow-up into effective implementation); a search for more effective ways of organising a coherent dialogue with the various levels of governance (pan African, regional, national and local) as well as for ensuring a truly inclusive dialogue, which integrates the specific governance agendas of African peoples and organisations (e.g. civil society, political society, local governments)¹.

3. How to strengthen the primary responsibility of Africa in promoting governance?

In order to improve ownership, effectiveness and impact, the joint strategy could clarify how Europe can help African institutions and actors to assume leadership on governance matters. This includes agreement on concrete actions Europe could take to support more effectively African governance policy frameworks (e.g. the AU Convention on preventing and combating corruption) institutions (e.g. AUC, the RECs, the envisaged Africa Governance Institute) and instruments (e.g. the APRM) up to the phase of implementation. It also invites parties to consider how Africa's primary responsibility for monitoring key governance processes (e.g. election observation²) could be ensured with adequate capacity development strategies and financial support over time.

4. How can the effectiveness of EU governance support be enhanced?

This requires a joint analysis of lessons learnt with EU/EC governance support so far ('what has worked, what did not work and why?'). It invites parties to consider how the overall relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and potential impact of EU governance support could be improved. This, in turn, means refining current approaches to political dialogue; programming (at various levels); local capacity mobilisation on governance; modalities of engaging with civil society, political society and local governments; as well as mechanisms for downward accountability to African citizens.

¹ The governance priorities of these actors do not necessarily coincide with official agendas. For an example see Vienna Declaration on the EU-Africa Strategy, elaborated by civil society organisations from both continents following a meeting on 23-24 June 2006 (www.europafrika.org).

² The AU Commission has received an explicit mandate to assume a leadership role in election observation. It has developed concrete proposals to build its capacity in the field (including an Election Observation Fund). The joint strategy could help to clarify the optimal role division between the different parties and propose concrete measures to enable the AUC to effectively perform this role.



5. How should performance on governance be assessed?

Both parties insist that governance is a shared value underpinning the partnership relation. Yet in the absence of effective implementation strategies -allowing for fair and balanced performance review- there is a risk that governance will be perceived as a new externally imposed conditionality. In order to avoid this, it will be crucial to agree on a jointly owned framework to assess performance. The current dialogue could help to define such a framework, ideally based on the following principles: (i) a leadership role for the various African actors in setting the governance agenda; (ii) a multi-actor dialogue mechanism to agree upon relevant performance criteria; (iii) participatory and transparent mechanisms for monitoring governance progress; as well as (iv) reciprocity -so as to include an assessment of the governance performance of the various European actors in dealing with Africa.

6. How can mutual accountability be promoted?

In order to ensure that governance yields the expected development benefits (e.g. in terms of achieving the MDGs) mutual accountability is crucial. Both parties agree on the principle, but the current dialogue could produce a major added value if it could spell out in greater detail the scope, content and operational modalities for translating the principle of 'mutual accountability' into practice³.

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY MANAGEMENT (ECDPM)

Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
NL-6211 HE Maastricht
The Netherlands
Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00,
Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02

Rue Archimède 5,
B-1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel +32 (0)2 237 43 10,
Fax +32 (0)2 237 43 19

More information: info@ecdpm.org www.ecdpm.org

³ This includes the respect for good governance principles in areas such as trade and economic cooperation, arms control, environment, etc. as well as in relatively new policy areas (migration; trafficking of human beings; intellectual property rights; illegal waste disposal, etc.).