

## Key Messages of the Conference

*This is the organiser's elaborated summary of key points emerging from the Conference that was attended by over 70 Civil Society Actors from Africa and Europe. The aim of the Conference was to discuss and exchange ideas on the Joint EU-Africa Strategy rather than to arrive at a formal declaration, as the participants present felt that they did not have a mandate to endorse statements on behalf of Civil Society. A synthesis of the Key Messages was presented to the EU-Africa Expert Meeting that took place in Brussels on 26-28 April 2007:*

<http://europafrika.files.wordpress.com/2007/05/bad-honnef-key-message-final.doc>

### **Preamble**

Although the debates were rich, they seemed to provoke **more questions than answers**. A general lack of understanding among civil society actors was noted on the expected impact on the ground of the future Joint Strategy. Uncertainty also surrounded the proposed relationship between the Joint Strategy and existing partnerships and instruments of cooperation and political dialogue between the EU and Africa, and whether the Joint Strategy would merely integrate these or result in new initiatives. A related point of contention was the true value-added of a Joint Strategy beyond the support it provided for the principle of '*treating Africa as one*'.

Despite this background, strong agreement emerged on **principles and values**. In developing a Joint Strategy, there is a need to recognise the historical legacy of unequal relations between Africa and Europe, the most recent incarnation of which is that of recipient and donor. The Joint Strategy needs to address a partnership and participatory approach between Africa and the EU as well as the political level and Civil Society. Participants called for a new people-centred and people-driven partnership based on a set of shared principles, including mutual accountability, democracy, trust, justice, the rule of law, equality, citizenship, ownership, gender awareness and sustainability.

The **potential added value** of a Joint Strategy could reside in the opportunity it provides to better integrate various sector-based agreements. It could allow moving away from a fragmented relationship and towards bringing different strands together. A Joint Strategy

might also reflect better the recent changes and developments in both Unions and their interest in jointly tackling problems at a global level. A Joint Strategy could further be beneficial to the peoples of both continents, provided it gives them a strong voice. Finally, it may lead to the creation of a more structured framework to systematically involve Civil Society in the official relations between the two continents

Considerable **scepticism** was also voiced. There is a real danger that the Joint Strategy could be 'just another strategy paper'. Will it genuinely improve the coherence of EU policies towards Africa and for development? Moreover, will the Strategy process also integrate critical voices? Will it change other critical debates where the EU is currently not listening to Africa, such as over EPAs? Finally, would a Joint Strategy take account of African debates and diverging views, for instance on the negative effects of neo-liberalism, or would it simply reinforce the ascendance of market liberalism?

A lot of work remains to be done in order to arrive at common Civil Society positions on many of the questions raised above.

### ***Process and role of Civil Society***

Concerns were expressed about the **short timeline and the process** leading to a Joint EU-Africa Strategy. In order to have a meaningful consultation, there must be a transparent process with clarity on such questions as: Who decides on participation and outcomes? What is the timing of the process? When inputs can be made, and to whom? How will inputs be taken into account? Participants took note of the reasons why the draft outline had not been distributed and expressed regrets regarding this decision since it would have allowed for a more focussed contribution. Making the outline public after the Ministerial meeting in May would provide a new opportunity for more focussed comments. Participants took note that the consultation would continue after May.

There was appreciation for the number of African participants at the Conference. For a genuine EU-Africa partnership **all types of actors should be involved** in the consultation. Women's organisations, youth and diaspora should participate on an equal footing. There is still a need to convince many of the Civil Society Organisations that serious engagement in the formulation process is worth spending their limited resources on. In this context, financial support for full participation of Civil Society in Europe and Africa would be desirable.

Participants felt that the Lisbon Summit should be seen as one further milestone in the Joint Strategy process rather than an end in itself, and the question of **what happens after the Summit** should be addressed. Reflection is needed on the appropriate mechanisms to monitor implementation. More decentralised accountability mechanisms should be put in place. Monitoring would be easier if there was an action plan with indicators, and the official monitoring process should be accompanied by civil society monitoring. Independent spaces should be created for civil society dialogue and monitoring.

There were substantial discussions about the **follow-up options for Civil Society**. Participants should use their networks to inform their constituencies about the Joint Strategy process. Global fora and existing thematic networks must be used to inform and disseminate relevant information and discuss the process, progress and objectives of the Joint Strategy. There is a need to map open, decentralised and autonomous civil society initiatives concerning the Joint Strategy. Taking a sector-based approach may be more manageable in this context. Although an appropriate space is needed for African, European and joint Euro-African civil society discussions, meetings with officials remain of vital importance. Concerning the monitoring work, using scheduled events and active networks (who does what?) would be useful. Finally, the African caucus met after the formal closing of the Conference in order to discuss possibilities for cooperation, coordination and follow-up.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <b><i>‘There is a need to move from consultation to involvement’</i></b></li><li>➤ <b><i>‘We are not endorsing a strategy that we do not know’</i></b></li></ul> |
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## ***Key points from Thematic Working Group Reports***

### **I. Governance, Democracy & Human Rights**

- *Governance Agenda*: every country must decide its own governance agenda, which should come from its grassroots. A bottom-up approach is needed in order to re-establish the state from the local level (participation of civil society, local authorities, media, parliaments, women, young people, etc). There is no appetite for a single agenda imposed from outside. At the same time some general principles should be adhered to, e.g. transparency and mutual accountability.

- *Mutual Accountability*: conditionality is acceptable but it must be agreed upon and shared, instead of imposed unilaterally. Europe must also be held accountable so that aid becomes more effective, more transparent, better coordinated and coherent. There should be no double standards. For example, Europe's position towards Africa should not be different from its position towards China, and neither should it differ from the standards Europe maintains internally.
- *Enforcement*: We must find a mechanism that guarantees that mutual commitments are respected. This must happen through regular and inclusive dialogue, which goes beyond formal dialogue and which includes the participation of civil society.

## II. Key Development Issues

- Participants did not agree with the neo-liberal development model and called on the EU and AU in their Joint Strategy to recognise and recommit to following key principles which are already part of our existing international commitments, such as:
  - Human Rights and the Right to Development.
  - Justice – including in the economic sense, on debt, the environment, etc.
  - Ownership – including ownership based on the autonomy of national and local governments and civil society and grassroots movements.
  - Equality and particularly gender equality.
  - Human Security – including physical security, food security, etc.
  - Pro-poor, people-focussed development.
  - Policy space for African governments and civil societies.
- Important key development issues for the Joint Strategy which were identified by the group, but which require further debate, include:
  - ODA, debt and aid effectiveness.
  - Human and social development, including education and health for all, HIV/AIDS, access for vulnerable groups and achievement of the MDGs.
  - Environmental sustainability and climate change.
  - Migration.

## III. Trade & Regional Integration

- The group recognised the rationale for and potential value added of the EU-Africa Strategy for trade and regional integration.
- Trade agreements should have a clear development dimension.

- The impact of EU agricultural policies on African agriculture and rural populations should be taken into account.
- Policy coherence must be ensured between the EU-Africa Strategy, EU development policies, trade agreements and other EU policies with external impacts.
- An on-going policy dialogue must be established between the EU and Africa – in that sense the Joint Strategy should be seen as a means to this end.
- Africa's own integration process, that is the Abuja Treaty (AEC) process, has to be respected.

#### **IV. Peace & Security**

- Peace and security based on human security require a sustained, holistic approach encompassing crisis management, long term peace building, development conflict prevention and governance.
- Predictable funds are needed with easier access for civil society. In addition to development funding there should be separate financial support for peace keeping operations.
- On-going dialogue with civil society on peace and security is essential and specific structures and mechanisms should be enshrined in the Strategy, particularly with regard to early warning and early action.
- Capacity building should reinforce existing structures with particular emphasis on civilian capabilities in peace and security. It is important that peace building and conflict prevention activities be carried out by permanent professional staff.