



Towards a Joint Africa-Europe Partnership Strategy

Issue Paper I

The EU-Africa Partnership in Historical Perspective

ECDPM, Maastricht (Netherlands), December 2006

Multiple frameworks for the EU-Africa relationship

1. The framework for the EU-Africa relationship is fragmented for historical and geo-strategic reasons, characteristics which remain embedded in EU-Africa relations. Three frameworks for cooperation between the European Union and Africa, with various degrees of partnership, co-exist and have evolved according to the international and continental contexts:
 - The *Cotonou Partnership Agreement*, which defines the various aspects of the relationship between African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Union including the development cooperation, political and trade dimensions. The Cotonou Partnership Agreement followed the Yaoundé and then Lomé Conventions, which were historically determining Europe's cooperation and trade framework with some of its former colonies. All sub-Saharan African countries, including in some respects South Africa, are party to this agreement.
 - The former Barcelona process, creating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which has now been merged into the *European Neighborhood Policy* that defines Europe's relationship with its neighbors among which Northern African countries. This framework reflects how Europe sees its priorities with its neighboring countries.
 - The *Trade and Development Cooperation Agreement with South Africa*, which has now been complemented by an EU-South Africa Strategy, and entails the various dimensions of European relations with South Africa: trade relations, political dialogue and cooperation.
2. These various agreements and policies define Europe's multiple relationships with Africa and raise issues of the consistency of European relations with the



various regions in Africa, of influence on the emergence of a pan-African vision and of the degrees of coordination among various actors. Relations between the EU and Africa have also evolved over time; indeed they have changed dramatically since the 1990s largely as a result of shifting economic and political interests in the post-Cold War period. The political dimension has for instance been strengthened within the revised Lomé IV Convention with ACP countries and again in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

The Cairo Process

3. Since the late 1990's the EU has gradually moved towards a more specific relationship with Africa, beyond the ACP. As the largest, potentially richest and closest (both geographically and historically) region within the ACP, Europe has repeatedly stressed its special relationship with Africa (e.g. through EC communications on conflicts in Africa in 1996 and EU-Africa dialogue in 2003, a number of Council conclusions and joint actions regarding Africa).
4. The first EU-Africa Summit in Cairo (April 2000) launched a comprehensive framework for political dialogue between the EU and African sides and a plan of action in the following priority areas:
 - Regional integration in Africa
 - Integration of Africa into the world economy (trade, private sector development, investment, development resources, industrial infrastructure, research & technology, debt, cooperation in international fora)
 - Human rights, democratic principles and institutions, good governance and rule of law (including the role of civil society, migration, refugees etc)
 - Peace-building, conflict prevention, management and resolution (including DDR, terrorism, small arms and light weapons, anti-personal mines, non-proliferation and post-conflict reconstruction)
 - Development issues: sustainable development challenges and poverty eradication, health, environment, food security, drug consumption and trafficking, culture (including the export or removal of African cultural goods).
5. The Cairo agenda set the priorities along which the EU-Africa dialogue and partnership would develop. It translated into an increasing convergence of interests, despite differences between the EU and African states with regard to the primacy given to the identified priorities: Europeans by and large putting the accent particularly on peace and security issues, and Africans more on the trade and economic aspects of the partnership, including the need to address the debt problem. On the African side, many still consider that some of the issues set out in the Cairo agenda have not really been addressed or at least not had the attention they deserved (e.g. debt issue and the return of African cultural goods), and these are, to some extent, still a source of frustration.



In search of a reinforced partnership between Europe and Africa (2000-2005)

6. The changing political climate in Europe and Africa laid the foundations for a new type of partnership between the EU and Africa. The deepening of the European integration process led to the development of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the subsequent push for a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and European Security Strategy (ESS), in line with European ambitions for a greater political role on the international scene. In Africa, a new impetus was given to regional integration processes and a growing number of African states showed a strong determination to formulate (pan-) African answers to the major problems of the continent.
7. The launching of NEPAD (2001) and the transformation of the OAU into the African Union (2002) have reinforced these trends towards greater pan-African cooperation and given a significant boost to EU-Africa partnership, not least because the EU finally had on the African side a comparable institutional partner committed to common priorities. The rapidly adopted and ratified Constitutive Act of the AU demonstrated that there was an increasing commitment to tackle key socio-economic, political and security issues in Africa. For the donor community it meant Africans were clearer about what they wanted for Africa and from the international community, bringing renewed chances for a stronger and more equal partnership, a better coordination among the donor community and an effective African ownership of the process. While there seemed to be consensus on the ultimate objectives of the AU it was much more difficult to reach consensus on the way, means and roles of the different players to achieve these objectives. However, in only 5 years the AU has produced some concrete results in the area of peace and security (e.g. Peace and Security Council, AU peace keeping operations, African Standby Forces), the promotion of democratic governance (e.g. APRM, democratic transitions in many African countries) and in representing Africa in the international community (UN, EU, China, Latin America)

The EU Strategy for Africa (2005)

8. 6 years after the first EU-Africa Summit, most 'Cairo' key thematic areas still dominate the EU-Africa agenda. The EU Strategy for Africa, adopted by the EU Council in December 2005 is a comprehensive policy framework that reflects the priorities of the EU in its relationship with Africa. In addition to the key priority areas of Cairo, issues such as the fight against terrorism and migration have been given significant importance. The Strategy aims to reinforce coordination and complementarity across the various EC's Directorates General and between EC and EU member states' policies and strategies towards Africa. It also aims to ensure greater coherence among different European policy areas that have an impact on Africa (trade, aid, defense, peace and security, agriculture, migration), which is in itself a challenging process and a test to the European institutions and MS commonality of interests, capacity and political will. Clearly some progress has been realized in ensuring enhanced cooperation between the Council



Secretariat and the EC, amongst others, on the EU concept for strengthening African capabilities for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

9. The EU Strategy for Africa also provides guidelines for coordination in international fora (UN, G8) and with other players (e.g. China, as recently agreed recently in the 9th EU-China summit) in line with its commitment to a policy of effective multilateralism.

Towards a joint EU-Africa Strategy (2006-2007)

10. Concerns have been raised by key African players that the EU Strategy for Africa might reflect a too biased European priority agenda, which would not be conducive to creating African ownership. Both the EU and Africa have therefore agreed to elaborate a joint EU-Africa Strategy at the Brazzaville Ministerial troika that should fully take account of African priority setting and ensure a strong ownership of all stakeholders on both sides. A joint consultation process involving a large diversity of key actors and stakeholders should lead to a joint EU-Africa Strategy that could be adopted by the second Heads of State Meeting at the end of 2007 under Portuguese EU Presidency.
11. This may well prove to be a unique opportunity to address up front the real 'needs and wants' of Europeans and Africans, and what do they effectively expect from each other.

Lessons Learned from the Existing Framework for EU-Africa Relationship

12. The first part of this paper has focused on the multiple existing agreements and policy frameworks between the EU and Africa. Priorities have been defined as well as how to handle the various dimensions of the partnership. Many actors, especially on the European side, have expressed a certain strategy fatigue and questioned the added value of the proposed joint EU-Africa Strategy given what already exists.
13. It is thus necessary to underline the key lessons learnt from the implementation of the existing cooperation framework in order to define future challenges to be addressed in a joint EU-Africa Strategy:
 - Significant progress has been achieved in terms of ***institutional dialogue*** between the EU and Africa especially between the two Commissions with the yearly Commission to Commission meeting that is then translated in regular meetings at all levels between Commission officials. However if these privileged relationships exist among the two Commissions and to a certain extent among both Unions, the ***involvement of other types actors*** still have to be worked through and structured in the EU-Africa relationship: to what extent could the elaboration of the joint EU-Africa strategy and the consultation process contribute to that involvement in a non ad hoc manner?



- A key issue raised by both Europeans and Africans during/after the elaboration of the EU Strategy for Africa is the question of **ownership**: on the European side, the exercise has been led by the European Commission and the Presidency and some Member States have felt a bit distant from the exercise. European non-state actors were mainly consulted after the approval of the Strategy. On the African side, there has been very limited consultation outside the regular dialogue with the African Union Commission which also led to a lack of information and ownership and a request to elaborate a joint EU-Africa Strategy at the Bamako Ministerial. There is a need to create ownership of the process beyond the formal EU and AU institutions, involving the Regional Economic Communities, and African state and non state actors in this process.
- If the quality of the various cooperation frameworks with Africa is often acknowledged, the issue of **implementation** is systematically brought forward by various stakeholders. Aid effectiveness and the necessary coordination of actors are on the international development agenda and have been the object of various international declarations. However when it comes to practice, commitments are not always delivered on the ground.
- The issue of implementation also brings forward the question of how to best **monitor** the implementation of the Strategy and in particular of commitments made on both sides. An issue is for instance that the relevant actors are not always associated with the monitoring exercise which is conducted in a centralized manner by institutional actors such as the two Commissions and the Council Secretariat with discussions limited to institutional actors in the case of the EU Strategy for Africa. The involvement of other types of actors, non-state actors as well as others directly involved in the implementation of the strategies and partnerships could also be considered
- The post-postponement of the EU-Africa Heads of States Summit as a consequence of the Zimbabwe issue and despite the strong relationship between the two continents as mentioned before, illustrates the complexity of the dialogue between the EU and Africa and well as the multiplicity of actors and peculiar interests involved. It also raises the issue of **the lack of provisions made to manage tensions and conflicts emerging from the partnership**, resulting in the lack of solutions to the existing crisis that has been dominated the debate for years. How could this be addressed in the future joint EU-Africa Strategy?



Challenges to be addressed by the future joint EU-Africa Strategy

14. On the basis of this short stocktaking of key issues with the existing framework for the Euro-Africa partnership, the following challenges can be highlighted and should be addressed by the future EU-Africa Strategy :
15. As mentioned in Issue Paper 1, ***the definition of a shared agenda*** that will include the key issues on both sides ***is of key importance to the process***. The agenda should include issues that have not been tabled or solved so far, as well as the most sensitive issues such as the lack of provisions foreseen to manage tensions and conflicts emerging from the partnership. Appropriate time and attention should be devoted to this exercise in order to agree on a common agenda with the involvement of the appropriate actors.
16. The ***involvement of all actors concerned*** during the elaboration of the Strategy as well as the ***sequencing of their involvement and the time devoted to their consultation*** could enable actors to tackle the ownership issue on both sides and specifically on the African side which has not elaborated yet its expectations and priorities towards Europe.
17. Creative ways and mechanisms in terms of ***follow up of the implementation*** with for instance the involvement of a larger group of actors in the monitoring process could also contribute to address ownership issues as well as to improve the quality and transparency of the monitoring process while further responsabilising certain categories of actors.
18. ***The complex and fragmented EU-Africa relationship*** is often raised on the African side and by certain European actors (see Issue Paper 3) and should also be tabled. How to ensure a certain coherence among the various frameworks of cooperation and a better coordination of the multiple actors involved including member states and sub-regional organisations? How can the European Union handle the diversity of its relationships with Africa while still treating it as one?