



The public consultation on the joint EU-Africa Strategy: What is the state of the debate? ¹

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A public consultation was launched by the African Union Commission and the European Commission at the beginning of February in order to gather civil society recommendations on the joint EU-Africa Strategy to be approved at the planned second EU-Africa Summit in December 2007. The first phase of this consultation lasted until the end of April, with the approval of an outline of the future joint Strategy on 15 May by the joint EU-Africa Ministerial Troika².

The first phase of the consultation was facilitated by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) as an independent foundation. The public consultation was mainly carried out through an Internet consultation open to all European and Africa contributors as well as a first seminar organised by the African Union Commission (AUC) for some representatives of African civil society in Accra, Ghana, on 26-28 March and a conference co-organised by VENRO and ECPM in Bad Honnef, Germany, on 23-24 April³. The public consultation was structured along five priority themes for the EU-Africa dialogue identified in the aftermath of the first EU-Africa Summit of Heads of States and Governments in Cairo in 2000 : (1) shared vision, (2) governance, democracy and human rights, (3) key development issues, (4) trade and regional integration and (5) peace and security.

In this paper, ECDPM aims at providing a brief overview of the recommendations conveyed by civil society so far in Europe and in Africa on the future joint EU-Africa Strategy mainly through these seminars and the Internet consultation but including also comments made in various relevant fora. The second part is ECDPM's analysis of to what extent issues raised by civil society have been or have not integrated in the outline approved on 15 May. On the basis of this, suggestion is made of the points that could be the basis of the public consultation until the Summit at the end of the year.

¹ Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of ECDPM as an independent facilitator and do not represent any official position of the AU or EU institutions.

² The outline approved on 15 May 2007 will be published in the coming days. Please consult www.europafrica.org for regular updates.

³ The reports and details on the two conferences and the Internet consultation are available at: <http://europafrica.org/2007/01/01/results/>



1 Civil society consultation on the joint EU-Africa Strategy : what outcome from the first phase?

This first part aims at providing a summary of the comments made by civil society representatives in the framework of the public consultation so far.

Scepticism on the process leading to a joint EU-Africa Strategy

In terms of the **process and the role of Civil Society**, concerns were voiced 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 on clarity who decides on participation and outcomes, the timing of the process, and how inputs will be taken into account. In all fora, civil society representatives have insisted that the consultation process should not stop in May and there should be a second phase to this consultation in order to allow proper involvement of all categories of non state actors in Europe and in Africa. For a genuine EU-Africa partnership **all types of actors should be involved** in the consultation.

Participants to the public consultation 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 require 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.

What will be the added value of the joint Strategy?

Although the debates were rich in Accra and in Bad Honnef, they seemed to provoke **more questions than answers**, notably on the expected impact on the ground of the future Joint Strategy, 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.

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 between the political level and Civil Society. Conclusions of the seminars and the Internet consultation called for a new people-centred and people-driven partnership based on a set of shared principles, including mutual accountability, mutual respect, equal partnership, democracy, trust, justice, the rule of law,



human security, equality, human rights, right to development, citizenship, ownership, gender awareness and sustainability.

The potential added value of a Joint Strategy could reside in the opportunity it provides for a **real change in EU-Africa relationship** and in particular with better integrating various sector-based agreements by moving away from a fragmented relationship and towards bringing different strands together. A Joint Strategy might also better reflect the recent changes and developments in both Unions and their interest in jointly tackling problems at a global level. It 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. In that framework, some civil society representatives were calling for a mechanism guaranteeing the **enforcement** of mutual commitments.

Considerable **scepticism** was also voiced. There is a real danger that the Joint Strategy could be 'just another strategy paper' and several civil society representatives have pointed out the necessity of **first making a critical assessment of the existing policies/partnership** and see whether to what extent they deliver on their promises and try to improve their implementation before embarking this new exercise. 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?

Civil society representatives have also underlined the need for the Strategy to go beyond a long list of recommendations and to address structural difficulties in the present EU-Africa relationship. **Recommendations should anyway be translated into concrete commitments** that can be monitored.

Main recommendations on each theme

Concrete suggestions were made by the various actors on how to translate this call for a 'real change' in EU-Africa relations in each of the five clusters. The paragraphs below summarize the main messages per theme.

Shared vision:

- Call for an equal partnership based on the principles such as respect and mutual accountability.
- Necessity to move away from a fragmented EU-Africa relationship in order to treat Africa as one continent and to adapt the existing policies and instruments accordingly
- Increased participation of non-state actors, such as civil society, local governments and the private sector, in policy-formulation, implementation and monitoring through a structured multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanism
- Upgrade the EU-Africa partnership by building alliances within global fora
- Necessity for the relationship to bring dividends in terms of development and prosperity to African people



Governance, democracy and human rights:

- Governance needs to be owned and African grown initiatives and instruments should be supported by the European Union
- Key governance players, such as Parliaments, Courts of justice and the police as well as other accountability bodies, need to be supported and a bottom up approach to governance promoted. The local level and civil society are of particular importance in ensuring governance and should be associated to all initiatives
- Attention has been called to the widespread violations of human rights in Africa. The joint Strategy provides an opportunity for the EU to strengthen its support to African human rights mechanisms.
- The joint Strategy should provide a framework to discuss contentious issues such as Zimbabwe
- Mutual accountability is a key principle to implement governance within both sides of the relationship and proper 'governance of aid' is an important element of it. In that framework conditionality should be agreed upon and not imposed unilaterally.
- Civil society, in particular in Africa, should have the opportunity to engage with the European governance initiative in order to ensure appropriate policy decisions, programming and implementation.

Key development issues:

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should provide the basis for the joint strategy.
- The EU should focus on delivering on its aid levels and aid effectiveness commitments
- Africa should be granted total debt cancellation
- Equal access to development programmes by all people, including vulnerable groups, needs to be ensured in order to achieve the MDGs. Gender also needs to be mainstreamed
- Root causes of migration need to be addressed and the role of diaspora reaffirmed. International conventions on migrants rights and trafficking should be endorsed and protection of refugees ensured.
- Health and education must remain a priority and current commitments on health and education implemented
- Europe's responsibility should be recognized on climate change, international environmental agreements respected by all parties and a Euro-African partnership on this topic should include additional non ODA funding

Trade and regional integration:

- Very strong recommendations on EPAs, with a reference to the on-going campaigns such as the 'Stop EPA' campaign, have been voiced: to integrate safeguard mechanisms into the EPAs and other trade agreements, to grant the developing countries preferential treatment, to omit Singapore issues, to extend the timeframe for the EPA negotiations, to respond positively to the requests of ACP countries



- The increased competitiveness and productivity of African agriculture needs to be supported and the EU should modify its agricultural policy in a more development oriented manner.
- Supply side constraints should be further addressed, notably regarding infrastructure, and public-private partnerships enhanced
- Private sector could be more structurally associate to policy formulation and implementation
- Africa's own integration process, i.e. the Abuja Treaty (AEC), should be supported.

Peace and security:

- There is a close link between development and security, which needs to be strengthened in the respective agendas. Policies on trade, natural resources ... also have a fundamental impact on conflicts and all EU engagements should be conflict sensitive.
- Peace and security based on the concept of human security requires a sustained holistic approach, encompassing crisis management, long term peace building, conflict prevention and governance. Conflict prevention as well as addressing the root causes of conflicts should be prioritized and predictable funding ensured. Military operations should not be funded on ODA.
- Further consolidating African capacity and assuring African ownership of conflict prevention and resolution through the African Peace and Security Architecture is a priority
- On-going dialogue with civil society, and in particular the involvement of women, youth and faith based groups, is essential and specific structures should be enshrined in the Strategy particularly with regard to early warning and early action.
- Control of arms trading and mercenary pursuit should also be addressed by Africa and the EU. Impunity should be addressed and Africa's legal and judiciary system strengthened in that respect
- Unilateral external interventions in African conflicts should be rejected, all interventions should be based on a UN or AU authorization
- Multi-nationals should comply with the norms of corporate responsibility on the African continent

2 State of the debate and what next?

The ideas and recommendations emerging from the first phase of the public consultation have been presented by ECDPM and the AUC at the joint expert meetings in various ways⁴. An analysis of the outline agreed on 15 May shows

⁴ The key messages emerging from the conference held in Bad Honnef on 23-24 April and from the Internet consultation were presented by ECDPM whereas the AUC presented the conclusions of the Accra conference of 26-28 March at the joint expert meeting of 26-28 April. Concrete proposals of insertion were made on that basis and discussed by the experts. The reports of the Internet consultation, the Accra conference and the Bad Honnef conference as well as all position papers



that some of civil society concerns have been picked up. However, there are other issues that are not yet in the existing text. This provides a basis for further discussion as the debate continues up to the Summit.

Which civil society concerns are already reflected in the 15 May outline?

There was correspondence between some of the ideas voiced by civil society representatives and those of the experts themselves such as the need for the Strategy to go beyond aid and include a wide range of global issues, the support to African human rights and governance instruments, the support to the African Peace and Security architecture, the delivery of aid level and aid effectiveness commitments, a range of principles including mutual accountability and ownership, ... On peace and security there is a certain consensus between the official outline and the proposals emerging so far from the public consultation. The need to enter into a continent to continent relationship leading to the gradual revision of the existing instruments was also in line with some civil society proposals as well as the principles mentioned in the outline.

Clearly it is a bit simplistic to attribute the integration of certain ideas in the outline purely to pressure and recommendations from civil society since – as mentioned below – some ideas advocated by civil society had already been discussed by the experts and for some of them civil society might have played a strong role in advocating them in previous campaigns. However, **a certain number of consensual ideas were integrated on the basis of recommendations** included in the reports of the two conferences and the Internet consultation and the formulation used by civil society has also helped the experts to enrich the text.

A first overall suggestion that was also voiced by some institutional actors and that has been integrated is the idea of adding an *action plan*⁵ to the existing outline in order to translate it into concrete commitments that can be operationalised and monitored. In general, the need to involve civil society in the dialogue on the various themes and the monitoring of the joint Strategy was reaffirmed with the *importance of an ongoing dialogue with civil society, the private sector and local stakeholders* on issues covered by the Joint Strategy in its implementation. The *right to development* and *human security* are now mentioned as principles guiding the partnership. Regarding peace and security, the need to promote peace and human security on the basis of a *sustainable and holistic approach* encompassing crisis management, long term peace building linked to governance, conflict prevention, *the need to address as a priority root causes of conflicts* as well as the commitment to ensure *predictable and flexible funding* for African-led peace support operations were reaffirmed in line with existing commitments. Under the trade and regional integration theme, the need to respect and *support Africa's own integration process* was also mentioned. Following requests from various types of

received have been distributed to all European and African experts.

⁵ As mentioned in the Communiqué of the joint EU-Africa Ministerial Troika of 15 May 2007. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/94126.pdf



actors, the key development issues theme was unpacked and split in various sub-themes. A specific reference to the notion of *policy coherence for development* of EU and African policies having an impact on Africa's development was added as well as the *mainstreaming of gender* and ensuring *equal access to social services by women, vulnerable groups and in particular groups with special needs*.

Possible key agenda issues for the second phase of the consultation?

The points supported by civil society and that have been taken into account have been listed above. But what does it mean for the next phase of the process? As an independent facilitator, we have observed that there is quite a lot of controversy on a set of key issues. In order to build the widest possible ownership for the new strategy it would be useful to continue the debate on these issues and to see how far one can go in reaching consensus.

One thing that emerged strongly from the Bad Honnef meeting was that civil society wanted to be more structurally involved, asking to move 'from consultation to involvement'. The modalities of this need to be considered but it is also important to list the possible key points for discussion:

1. **Economic Partnership Agreements⁶**: European and African civil society have been regularly raising various issues on EPAs (as mentioned in the first part of this paper) and in particular they have been asking for the extension of the deadline of the EPA negotiations. As the Summit will be held as the negotiations of EPAs are likely to reach their peak, there is clearly a danger that the debate on the Strategy and at the Summit will be overwhelmed by disagreements on EPAs unless some constructive way out is found beforehand. Ideally of course, the joint Strategy should be a framework for dialogue and finding common solutions to such areas of divergence.
2. Another recurrent debate on trade is also the call for a **more pro-development European agricultural policy** and although the outline contains some reference on the improvement of **policy coherence for development**, this issue could also be at the centre of the debate as well as the delivery of existing commitments on that matter.
3. A stronger integration of **the role of civil society as a governance player** both in Europe and in Africa: this role should be better acknowledged in the Strategy. It could in the first instance play an important role in the monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy and making sure that Europe and Africa deliver on their promises. As a governance player it should also be fully associated to the discussion on the **governance initiative** and its programming, which should also be at the core of the discussions between now and the end of the year. Further debate might also be needed on the **human rights** issue since it is a key concern for both European and African civil society and how to best protect human rights activists.

⁶ Civil society inputs on this debate have often been made in other fora of discussion than the public consultation launched on the future EU-Africa joint Strategy.



4. The **promotion of 'conflict sensitive' policies** by the EU and Africa at all levels notably regarding natural resources, energy, arms trading, mercenaries pursuit policies and the reinforcement of legal and judiciary provisions to address impunity is one area that could also be further strengthened but where a consensus might be difficult to reach among all European and African Member States. How to strengthen corporate responsibility of European multinationals working in Africa could be part of this debate.
5. Regarding migration, the outline focuses on the commitments contained in the Tripoli Declaration. However some aspects are not included yet in the Tripoli Declaration and will probably deserve further debate. For instance, the **endorsement of international conventions on migrants rights and protection** is one area where civil society might focus. Another issue that came out strongly is acknowledging the role of the diaspora and using their capacities.
6. **Total debt cancellation** has also been claimed by both civil society as well as African institutions with a specific reference to double standards applied by the European Union regarding the cancellation of its bilateral debt (i.e. Iraq). The answer provided in the Strategy so far (i.e. to address this issue in the appropriate fora) will probably not satisfy the requests expressed by civil society and more specific solutions could be discussed, such as setting up a joint expert group to ensure the follow up of the conclusions of the Dublin joint Ministerial Troika on this matter in 2004.
7. Since the publication of the OECD annual report this year, development NGOs are being especially active in a debate on whether the EU will deliver on its **ODA commitments** in the coming years. This debate will most probably go on in the framework of the discussion of the joint EU-Africa Strategy. Delivery of promises on **aid effectiveness** will probably also be under scrutiny as well as the programming of the 10th EDF, which will be one of the key instruments to implement the joint Strategy.
8. The question of the added value of the future joint EU-Africa Strategy should remain one of the key issues. The issue of the **relationship between the Strategy and the existing agreements and instruments** is closely linked to that and the timeframe and the way in which the present instruments and agreements will be adapted to the new 'continent to continent' relationship will certainly be a focal point of the debate.
9. Civil society representatives have asked for **concrete commitments to beef up the outline**. The Ministerial Troika has tasked the experts to work on an initial action plan which is certainly a first step in this direction and a lot of attention will be paid on the operational commitments taken and how they will be monitored.
10. Some civil society representatives want to move 'from consultation to



involvement' as mentioned at the Bad Honnef conference and this would, among other aspects, imply an important role in the monitoring mechanisms of this Strategy. **How will the monitoring mechanisms be conceived in order to ensure delivery of the commitments made? What will be the role of civil society?** These questions need to be debated between civil society representatives and officials for monitoring mechanisms to be defined and clear division of responsibilities established.

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