



Council ad hoc working group on the EU-Africa Strategy

ECDPM report of the meeting of 20 September 2007

The Council ad hoc working group met on 20 September in preparation for the Joint Expert Troika Meeting negotiating the strategy scheduled for the following week. CONCORD, the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development, was invited by the Portuguese Presidency to discuss the process with the representatives from the Member States, the Council and the Commission.

The group of representatives from CONCORD was headed by the Portuguese National NGDO Platform. The others present included Aprodev, ActionAid, Oxfam, Christian Blind Mission International as well as the CONCORD secretariat.

The discussions evolved around four topics, with CONCORD representatives kick-starting the discussions by asking more information on each of them:

- (1) *The Strategy and the Action Plan in the broader context of EU-Africa relations*
- (2) *An update on the drafting process*
- (3) *The Lisbon Summit*
- (4) *Civil society involvement in the Strategy and its monitoring*

1. The Strategy and the Action Plan in the broader context of EU-Africa relations

CONCORD first questioned the **added value** of the Strategy in the existing framework for EU-Africa relations and **how it would relate to existing frameworks and agreements**. According to the Commission representative, the Strategy is part of an enhanced strategic partnership with the African Union. It is a partnership where Africa and Europe can relate on a global level, and conduct dialogue on issues of mutual interest. A new aspect of the partnership is that it should be a people centred partnership. This still has to be translated into reality by the institutions together with civil society. He also explained that the Joint Strategy is a response to global challenges and changes. Europe and Africa are both changing. He especially highlighted positive developments in Africa, which makes this kind of process possible, notably greater integration, the establishment of the African Union, the African Peer Review Mechanism as well as African initiatives on conflict prevention.



On the question concerning the place of the Strategy amongst other strategic priorities of the EU, such as Peace and Security, Governance, regional integration and trade as well as development and achieving the MDGs the representative from the Commission claimed that they are all integrated in the Strategy and that it was important to address them through an overall framework and not to see them separately.

The value added of the Strategy can be seen especially in the political aspects, where shared values are formulated, and progress is being made in establishing the architecture for the partnership to work. Another important aspect that needs to be achieved with this process is **making sure that the AU is recognised as an equal partner**, both by the EU and more broadly. The institutional architecture will have to be adapted accordingly, with regular Summits to give a political impetus and more concrete specifications on the EU-Africa Ministerial Troikas. The German representative highlighted that although the negotiations were carried out with the African Union. Morocco was integrated in these discussions.

How will the Strategy be delivered in the present context?

CONCORD expressed some concerns on how the Strategy would be delivered in the existing framework. Indeed the programming of the 10th EDF is currently being finalised, relevant budget lines and in particular the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument also follows its own procedures and priorities. The issue is thus how to implement the Strategy in the existing framework, where will important decisions be taken given the growing number of decision making processes and what will be the consequence of the Strategy on the Cotonou Partnership Agreement?

Since the Strategy goes beyond development and includes other political topics, will **existing instruments** be able to cope with this wide scope and isn't there a risk that development funding is used to finance non development policies? How will **EU Member States** contribute to the implementation of the Strategy?

The representative of the Commission explained that the purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that all existing agreements work towards the same goal. He also ensured that the Strategy would not be funded entirely from the EDF and that the EDF programming was not yet completed – the intra-ACP envelope not being programmed yet - and could take the Strategy into consideration. In the long term the main part of ODA increases will be focused on Africa. However existing instruments would need to be adapted to this new Partnership in the future. The Danish representative ensured that Denmark's bilateral policy provided many opportunities to support the future framework since the objectives were similar.

2. An update on the drafting process

According to the representatives of the Presidency and the Commission, consequent progress has been made during the last meeting of the drafting



committee. The Strategy has been further elaborated on the basis of the outline adopted on 15 May by the EU-Africa Ministerial Troika.

The Action Plan that will be endorsed with the Joint Strategy is also being drafted. **Eight priority partnerships** have been identified : peace and security; democratic governance and human rights; trade and regional integration; achieving the MDGs; energy, climate change; migration, mobility and employment; and science, information society and space. These partnerships will be implemented in the next two years while some specific priorities have been identified for each of them to facilitate their implementation.

3. The Lisbon Summit

The agenda of the Summit is not agreed yet, but it will be at the level of Heads of State and Governments.

The German representative questioned whether CONCORD representatives thought that this Summit was worthwhile, since it would require a lot of political will from both sides. CONCORD responded that the Summit should take place and was especially an opportunity to progress on governance and human rights both in Africa and in the EU. The **involvement of civil society** is important, both in terms of participation and setting the agenda. However, CONCORD stressed that if it was certainly worth having the Summit, it should address **civil society issues and agenda** (see EPAs section).

The representative from the Commission further expressed a wish for further involvement of democratic institutions in this, such as the European and Pan African Parliaments, Economic, Social (and Cultural) Committees of both Unions and civil society. On this note he called for ideas on how to better engage with civil society.

The German representative mentioned that there had been discussion on how to include culture in the strategy, and asked for advice whether it was worthwhile to work on it. The response was that NGOs often work through culture, and there are plenty of examples of how it can be used in development work.

Governance and human rights

On the question whether the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, would attend, the German representative made clear that it was still under discussion within the EU. He presented two angles of the issue and asked what CONCORD's position was on this issue: the first would be to put the human rights and credibility issues above all other considerations, and this would be compromised if Mugabe was to attend. The second angle was that dialogue with Africa cannot be reduced to the Zimbabwe issue and that this dialogue is needed. CONCORD does not have a unified position on this topic but highlighted that what they all agreed on was that it is important to de-link governance and human rights from Zimbabwe only and that governance and human rights should be a core topic of the Summit.



This is one difficult question, but not the only one. They further stressed the **importance of enabling Zimbabwean civil society to participate in the summit.**

Economic Partnership Agreements

CONCORD representatives questioned whether issues such as EPAs and the conflict in Sudan would be addressed at the summit. CONCORD expressed that the pressure is high on ACP countries to sign EPAs and that maybe a light version would be possible now that could be developed later. **The summit needs to include a discussion on the EPAs at the highest political level otherwise it will undermine the credibility of the whole process.**

Gender

The CSOs recognised the role of gender in the Strategy, but argued that it needed a more prominent position. They recommended the EU to take on some of the AU language on gender and women. The Presidency and Commission representatives ensured that there were still discussions on how to address gender in the Strategy, as a mainstreamed issue or through a specific partnership on gender.

4. Civil society involvement in the Strategy and its monitoring

The Strategy aims to reach out to all components of civil society as an umbrella also for their activities. The German representative questioned whether the CSOs present were comfortable with this idea, and thought it would be useful. He also stressed the importance of civil society involvement in the implementation of the Strategy.

CONCORD representatives underlined the need to distinguish two aspects: collaborating to the monitoring of the Strategy is one thing while the definition of what CSOs consider as an appropriate Strategy for their own activities is another and **CONCORD would certainly be very interested in participating to the development of such an umbrella and collaborating to the monitoring of the Strategy as this is part of its usual work.** Indeed they already monitor the various EU commitments, for instance regarding ODA levels.

They also stressed that lessons should be learnt from previous experiences. It was recommended to look at other regions, and an example from Latin America was brought up. There is a tradition to organise civil society forums along with summits, but it is not well perceived since there is no continuous dialogue and civil society recommendations are not taken seriously. There is a **need for systematic dialogue with civil society** and not only an ad hoc dialogue at the occasion of the Summits. How to ensure civil society participation at all levels from the political dialogue level to the local level, and to take into consideration both African and European realities would also need to be discussed. If the EU is interested in working with civil society, that also means contributing to its support.



The Portuguese representative mentioned that civil society is given an important role in the monitoring of the strategy, and would be asked to concretely contribute to it. A **permanent platform for dialogue** should be developed. CONCORD representatives emphasised the importance of involving the components of civil society most effected by the Strategy in order to get results, and ensured that they are happy to engage in this dialogue with the institutions.

Finally CONCORD representatives stressed that for them to make a significant contribution, having access to the draft Strategy and Action Plan would be necessary and asked whether that would be possible. The Commission representative responded that it would be very useful if they could access the draft but that the question would need to be further examined.

CSO speakers:

- Ester Asin, Concord Secretariat
- Louise Hilditch, ActionAid
- Luis Morago-Nicolas, Oxfam
- Catherine Naughton, Christian Blind Mission International
- Sophie Robin, Portuguese NGDO platform
- Karine Sohet, Aprodev

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