



Interview by Europafrica with His Excellency (H. E.) Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif, African Union Representative to the European Union, published in Issue 33 of the Europafrica e-bulletin and on Europafrica.net website on 22nd of April 2010.

Europafrica : In your view, what is the main added value of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) in comparison to other partnerships that Africa has with other countries (i.e. China)?

H.E. Ambassador Mr Annadif: Its maturity as well as its historical, geographical and cultural dimensions make EU-Africa relations quite unique. However, such features can shape the partnership either positively or negatively. They can play a positive role if they allow both continents deal with the issues of their common past. They can also be negative by hampering progress.

The main challenge of this relationship, which can also – if resolved – add to the value of the JAES, is addressing the prevailing stereotypes. This is the condition that would enable the transformation of the current donor/recipient relationship into a meaningful win-win partnership. That means learning how to work as partners.

With China, the situation is different. There is no such common past. Comparatively, the relationship between China and Africa is new with a different set of shared interests at play. Therefore, working as partners may seem more straightforward. Today, China has become a major global actor and accordingly developed stronger ties with Africa and other regions alike. In addition, China's involvement in Africa concentrates on a number of priority areas, which are "visible" to the people, mainly infrastructure, and with no conditionalities, contrary to cooperation with the EU.

Globalisation led to a new global context and as a result Africa no longer accepts to be treated as a property. This again relates to the issue of changing mentalities. My conclusion, therefore, is that each global partnership needs to be considered both in its own right and in the new globalized context in which it emerges.

Europafrica : How do you view the performance of the JAES in terms of strengthening Africa-EU relations?

- **Political dialogue:**

H.E. Ambassador Mr Annadif: First, I would like to recall the approach adopted during the elaboration of the text of the Strategy. It was really a partner-to-partner dialogue. Each party expressed its vision and its concerns. All issues were addressed, even those where there was disagreement. Thus, it was possible to define in the Strategy a set of shared values, principles and objectives. The Joint Strategy offers a medium and long-term vision. It is a dynamic process that has an eye on a long-term perspective.

In this regard, it is important to stress that the adoption of the Strategy has generated a new impetus, particularly for political dialogue. The quality of this dialogue has significantly improved:

discussions have become more frequent and frank and some issues moved up in the agenda of both parties. The Commission-to-Commission meetings, either College to College or at the level of the EU-AU Joint Task Force, are held regularly and consistently. The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) and EU's Policy and Security Committee (PSC) meet regularly and discuss strategic issues. Furthermore, we systematically consult each other at the UN Security Council and other major international conferences (e.g. the Copenhagen Summit). In addition, since the adoption of the Strategy, each time the EU initiates a political dialogue with an African country in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, the AU is consistently consulted and invited to participate. The EU rarely takes position on any African issue without consulting the AU. This constitutes a critical support to the action of the AU.

These examples – there are many others – underline the added value of the Joint Strategy in terms of strengthening the political dialogue between the EU and Africa.

- **Harmonisation with other cooperation frameworks, such as the Cotonou Agreement, the Union for the Mediterranean ... :**

H.E. Ambassador Mr Annadif: As I mentioned earlier, the vision outlined in the Joint Strategy is that it is a dynamic process that is framed in a long-term perspective. However, one of the prerequisites to achieving our objectives will be to address the issue of harmonisation of legal and financial cooperation instruments. This harmonisation is indeed recommended in the Joint Strategy.

We agree that this has to be a gradual process. However, we must admit that so far, not much progress has been achieved. In fact, some of the agreements are clearly in contradiction with the principles of the Joint Strategy, notably the principle of “treating Africa as one”. In this respect, it is important to stress that this coherence between Agreements should be a shared responsibility, even though the EU could certainly play a catalyst role, considering the capacity divide between the two continents.

In sum, we must recognise that, at this stage, the harmonization of cooperation instruments constitutes the weakest link of the Joint Strategy, from both the African and the European sides.

- **The capacity of African States to consider themselves as a group with regard to their relations with the EU:**

H.E. Ambassador Mr Annadif: The example of the Union for the Mediterranean, which is in contradiction with the principles of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and certainly corresponds to another vision, illustrates quite well the fact that the process of harmonization of the various cooperation instruments has not really started yet. This example, as well as the recent process of revision of the Cotonou Agreement, clearly demonstrates that African countries also have a responsibility in the current situation.

Europafrica : What are, in your view, the principles challenges of the upcoming EU-Africa Summit for the future of the Strategy ?

H.E. Ambassador Mr Annadif : I would like to start by emphasising that the Tripoli Summit in November 2010 will constitute a critical challenge for the future of the Joint Strategy.

First, I would like to note that it comes after the Lisbon Summit, in December 2007, which was a real success and had generated so much hope. In addition, the Tripoli Summit will have the responsibility to assess the progress made since December 2007. In this respect, the mixed results, which seem likely to come out from the assessment, risk diluting the high expectations that the Strategy has generated.

Another challenge will be to identify meaningful and attractive topics that would allow the mobilization of large numbers of Heads of States from both continents. The positive evolution of our dialogue is certainly an element of optimism. Global concerns, such as the financial crisis, climate change or food crisis, are topics of interest and agreeing on a common approach to resolve them is an absolute necessity. But this will only be possible if the EU and other development partners fulfil their commitment in terms of climate change and official development assistance.

The migration issue will certainly be part of the agenda at the Tripoli Summit. Here again, it will be important for the EU to provide a continental and coherent vision on this alarming phenomenon.

Furthermore, the Summit will be an opportunity to make some institutional adjustments. The institutional architecture for the implementation of the Joint Strategy is certainly too heavy, while the coordination between its various structures is insufficient. In particular, the States' participation in the Joint Expert Groups is clearly inadequate. In this regard, the issue of the Chefs de file's responsibility should be raised at the Summit. The Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment has pointed out that the malfunctioning of the institutional architecture leads some countries to cooperate bilaterally. In this respect, I would like to underline the importance of putting the stress on the States' responsibility to fulfil their commitments.

Europafrica : Many observers consider that the first action plan is too ambitious. What would you suggest for the next action plan ?

H.E. Ambassador Mr Annadif: I think that it would be appropriate to consolidate the first action plan. Several things have worked quite well. In particular, the Peace and Security Partnership, with its three actions having been successfully implemented: the political dialogue has been considerably strengthened (notably through AU PSC - EU PSC meetings); funding has been significantly increased and became more predictable (through the EDF, it amounts to 300 million Euros) and the architecture is now operational (e.g. the reinforcement of brigades training and the AMANI-AFRICA Initiative).

On the other hand, there are several partnerships that are facing difficulties, both in terms of fulfilling the objectives and attributing performance. For example, in the Partnership on Millennium Development Goals, it has been difficult to distinguish between what, in terms of performance, results from the EU action from what is rather an outcome of the country itself or other countries' initiatives. This relates to the issue of the selected statistics, but also to the respect of commitments.

We have created many partnerships (i.e. eight in the first action plan) and I think that we should consider merging some of them in order to achieve more coherence; for example the partnerships on "climate change" and "energy".

Also, I do not think it is necessary to develop a second action plan. In my opinion, we should rather concentrate on reinforcing the ongoing action plan and prioritise pan-African projects, which are certainly more attractive to [African] States in terms of added value.