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Between the Summits

Andrew Sherriff with Patrícia Magalhães Ferreira

Background Paper

Introduction

“... Our common future requires an audacious approach, one that allows us to face with confidence the demands of our globalising world ... We are resolved to build a new strategic political partnership for the future ... We are determined to give this new strategic partnership the necessary means and instruments that will enable it to fulfil the Joint Strategy... ” (Excerpts from the Lisbon Declaration – 2nd EU Africa Summit, Lisbon, 8–9 December 2007).

This paper seeks to explore how EU–Africa relations have evolved between the Summits involving the Heads of State and whether they have lived up to the high expectations and commitments included in the Joint Africa–EU Strategy signed in Lisbon in 2007.¹ As such, the paper builds on and updates work undertaken by Patrícia Magalhães Ferreira in her paper entitled *“The Joint Africa–EU Strategy – Assessment and Implementation Challenges”*² and a paper completed by Jean Bossuyt and Andrew Sherriff entitled *“What next for the Joint Africa–EU Strategy? Perspectives on revitalising an innovative framework”*.³ It also adds original research related to the political dialogue undertaken in the context of the EU–Africa Troika meetings held before and after the advent of the JAES as well as other recent developments before the 3rd Summit.

The paper is designed both to give a general analysis of what has occurred “between the Summits” and also some perspectives on why certain expectations may not have been met, as well as offering “food for thought” for policy makers in Africa and Europe. The paper does not encompass an “Agenda for Action” or detailed thematic analysis of the issues (Peace and Security, Governance, Trade, Climate Change) at play as these are looked at in a more detailed analysis elsewhere in the *EARN Political Dialogue Report*.

1. The way to the Joint Africa–EU Strategy

Over the decades, the relationship between Europe and Africa has been characterised by the underlying global dynamics and the political context of each continent. In the post-colonial period, the Lomé Agreements – renamed Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) since 2000⁴ – have been the main legal framework of cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP).⁵ The first EU–Africa Heads of State Summit in 2000, in Cairo, recognised the need for a new high-level political relationship

¹ For an overview and analysis of the EU policy frameworks for Africa see, BOND and ECDPM, *EU and Africa: the Policy Framework for Development*, October 2010.

² This paper was completed for the Portuguese NDGO Platform in June 2010.

³ Available at: <http://www.ecdpm.org/dp94>, in French and Portuguese also.

⁴ More information on the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and its last revision at: http://ec.europa.eu/development/geographical/cotonuintro_en.cfm

⁵ The ACP group does not include North African states.

between the two continents and professed a new standard of multilateral cooperation that would not be based on the usual post-colonial perspectives and donor-recipient philosophy.

However, beyond the symbolic value and the political meaning, the context of the two continents led to slow progress in implementing the commitments and there was a long hiatus before the 2nd EU-Africa Summit was held, in 2007 in Lisbon. On the one hand, the differences in opinion became clear in international cooperation: the European side giving priority to peace and security issues, while the African side emphasised mainly economic and trade issues, including those regarding external debt. At a later stage, issues concerning Zimbabwe threatened to dominate talks and even “contaminate” the political dialogue between European and African institutions which initially led to the postponement of the 2nd Summit.

Nevertheless, in the period between the first two Summits in 2000 and 2007, important evolutions occurred in the two continents and globally, setting conditions for a new stage in the EU-Africa relationship. There was a resurgence of Africa’s geostrategic importance (largely lost in the post-Cold War period), either due to security matters – including the prominence of terrorism, piracy and drug trafficking as a fundamental element of international security since 2001 – or due to economic reasons, since Sub-Saharan Africa became one of the chief sources of oil supply, due to the instability of Middle East energy sources as well as other primary products. New African leadership and the launch of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)⁶, in 2001, and, above all, of the African Union (AU)⁷, in 2002, created a stronger, better organised and more pragmatic institutional interlocutor at a continental level. It also clearly demonstrated Africa’s new collective ambitions on a range of issues. On the European side, the development of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) bore out the ambition for greater political projection of the European project on the international scene. This was closer to the EU’s importance in terms of trade and public development aid (the EU as a whole – Member States and European Commission (EC) – finances about 60% of international aid). To this we can add the emergence of new actors in the international political system – such as China, determining a reformulation in the global strategic balances, where Africa plays a relevant role. Most of these trends have only accelerated since 2007 in the intervening period between the Summits.

After some tough negotiating on both sides, the EU-Africa Heads of State Summit in Lisbon in 2007 signed a new Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) that articulated a bold new vision for EU-Africa relations.⁸ The JAES was accompanied by a comprehensive Action Plan in eight thematic partnership areas of common interest with priority actions (see table 1). It is this Joint Africa-EU Strategy and its Action Plan which were to form a new basis for a renewed continent to continent relationship, with the ambition to take EU-Africa relations to a new strategic and political level.

⁶ www.nepad.org

⁷ www.africa-union.org

⁸ This is sometimes referred to as the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership.

Table 1: Partnerships and priority actions of Action Plan 2008–2010

| Partnership | Priority actions of Action Plan 2008–2010 |
|--|--|
| 1. Peace and security | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance dialogue on challenges to peace and security • Full operationalisation of African peace and security architecture • Predictable funding for African-led peace support operations |
| 2. Democratic governance and human rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance dialogue at global level and in the international arena • Promote the APRM and support the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance • Strengthen cooperation in cultural goods |
| 3. Trade, regional integration and infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the African integration agenda • Strengthen African capacities in the areas of rules, standards and quality control • Implement the EU–Africa Infrastructure Partnership |
| 4. MDGs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure the finance and policy base for achieving the MDGs • Speed up progress towards the MDG food security targets • Speed up progress in meeting the MDG health targets • Speed up progress in meeting the MDG education targets |
| 5. Energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensify cooperation on energy security and access |
| 6. Climate change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a common agenda on climate change policies and cooperation • Address land degradation and increasing aridity, including the ‘Green Wall for the Sahara’ initiative |
| 7. Migration, mobility and employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the declaration of the Tripoli Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development • Implement the EU–Africa Plan of Action on people trafficking • Implement and follow-up the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Action Plan on employment and poverty alleviation in Africa |
| 8. Science, information, society and space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of an inclusive information society in Africa • Support S&T capacity-building in Africa and implement Africa’s science and technology consolidated plan of action |

2. A short reminder of the ambitions of the JAES

It makes little sense to review the progress achieved so far and to discuss potential changes without revisiting the key objectives of the JAES to which the parties committed themselves during the 2007 Lisbon Summit. The high number of actors involved on both sides – each with varying levels of knowledge about the JAES – makes this brief reminder even more imperative. As does the fact that the visibility and awareness of these commitments in the EU and Africa still tends to be low outside the sphere of those who deal with the JAES on a day-to-day basis.

The JAES reflects both continuity and a major break from the past. It reconfirms existing principles of cooperation such as ownership and joint responsibility, respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, and the need for a people-centred partnership involving non-state actors (that can also be found in the ACP–EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement). Several of the JAES’s thematic partnerships (see table 1) also focus on topics that have been on the Africa–EU agenda for quite some time, or at least since the first Summit of 2000 (e.g. peace and security and governance) and even dating back to the first Lomé accords (e.g. economic development, trade). These components, albeit important, are not new.

Yet the JAES foundation documents also include major innovations aimed at “overcoming the traditional donor–recipient relationship” and fundamentally changing Africa–EU relations. This transformative reform agenda can be summarised in four major points, as shown in Box 1 below. It is this agenda that marks the JAES out from past agreements and is fundamental to understand what has been achieved between the Summits.

Box 1: Key joint commitments and innovations included in the JAES

- “To reinforce and elevate the Africa–EU partnership to address **issues of common concern**”

This objective illustrates the ambition to take the Africa–EU relationship to a new, strategic level with a strengthened political partnership and enhanced cooperation at all levels, including in the joint promotion of a system of effective multilateralism.

- “To this end both sides will **treat Africa as one and upgrade the Africa–EU political dialogue** to enable a strong and sustainable **continent-to-continent partnership**, with the AU and the EU at the centre”

This commitment stresses the need to deal with Africa as one (as opposed to the current fragmentation of policy frameworks ‘slicing’ up EU relations with Africa). It considers an upgraded political dialogue as the linchpin of the new partnership. It clearly states that the continental level is the key focus and added value of the JAES, with the two Unions at the core of the process and institutional architecture. In order to make this work, parties agreed on the need to have “strong institutions [on the African side] that invest particularly in their capacity to act effectively together and interact with each other”. To this end, the EU commits itself to further supporting the “ongoing institutional transformation process of the AU”⁹.

- “To strengthen regional and **continental integration** in Africa”

Through the Lomé Conventions and the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, Europe has provided long-standing support to regional integration processes. Yet the JAES is the first political framework which also fully recognises the need to promote *continental* integration. This reflects the creation of the AU and the need to support its pan African integration agenda. The “unity of Africa” is therefore considered to be one of the fundamental principles underlying the JAES¹⁰.

- “To provide an **overarching long-term framework** for Africa–EU relations”

The adoption of such an “overarching” new framework entails an obligation to “enhance the coherence and effectiveness of existing agreements, policies and instruments”¹¹ such as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). To this end, parties committed themselves “to work together towards gradually adapting relevant policies and legal and financial frameworks... to the needs and objectives of the partnership”¹².

Implementing such an ambitious agenda that is so political in nature requires a transition period, based on experimentation, collective learning and adjustments to well-established ways of organising Africa–EU relations. The transition should allow the JAES to gradually find its place alongside existing, legally binding policy frameworks and to demonstrate its added value. By definition, it is to be expected that the JAES objectives may overlap to some extent, and compete or conflict with

⁹ Ibid. See under Institutional Architecture and Implementation, par. 98

¹⁰ Ibid. See under “Principles”, par. 6

¹¹ Ibid. See under “Principles”, par. 6

¹² Ibid. See under “New Approaches”, par. 9 (f)

other policy objectives (such as the ENP)¹³. Progress on all these complex points is likely to largely depend on the capacity of all parties to strategically use the JAES effectively as a trigger to push forward their respective priority agendas. In many ways, the JAES can therefore be equated to a 'building under construction'.

3. The track record so far

3.1 Assessing progress: a challenging job

Three years between the Summits is a short period of time to assess the functioning of a complex, ambitious and innovative framework such as the JAES. Experience suggests that it tends to take years before innovative multilateral initiatives gain full awareness, ownership and momentum so as to deliver results to the stakeholders. This was evidenced for example by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement which has a much longer heritage, and was less ambitious in topics, yet even now is not necessarily well known at every level in Europe and Africa. In assessing progress it is possible to look at the trajectory the JAES has followed since the 2007 Lisbon Summit, to identify emerging trends as well as directions of change in the implementation process so far, and to compare these to the specific political objectives it set out to achieve (as described in the previous section).

In the first two years (2008–2009), the JAES sought to push forward the various thematic partnerships. It did this through related action plans and political dialogue (primarily in the form of six-monthly Troika meetings, see box 2). Another strategy was policy dialogue on thematic issues in the (informal) Joint Expert Groups (JEGs) for each of the 8 thematic partnerships of the JAES that were settled as the main implementation mechanism. In the process, a variety of EU–Africa institutional actors, experts and non-state actors were mobilised on both sides.

The JAES' parties committed themselves to a result-oriented approach. However, measuring the performance of the JAES was bound to be a challenging exercise, considering its innovative nature, the diversity of stakeholders' expectations and attribution problems, not to mention the lack of a clear and jointly agreed methodology to measure performance. Since the launch of the JAES, regular progress reports have been prepared (primarily by the EC) and endorsed (by the Joint Task Force¹⁴). The most comprehensive one was the joint 'Assessment Report' of October 2009, which appraises the progress made and challenges faced in each of the thematic partnerships as well as in the institutional structures and working methods of the JAES.¹⁵

With regard to the progress achieved, this 2009 report presents a wide range of activities (e.g. high-level conferences, joint workshops, studies) and initiatives (that have been launched or are in the pipeline) as well as some qualified successes. For instance, the report explicitly mentions achievements such as:

- Reinforced cooperation between the two continents (e.g. Peace and Security);

¹³ For instance, the privileged partnership relations sought with North African countries in the framework on the ENP is not necessarily compatible with the stated JAES objective to "treat Africa as one".

¹⁴ [AU / EU] Joint Task Force, Assessment Report, 9 Oct. 2009 FINAL.

¹⁵ Independent analysts may of course fundamentally disagree with the analysis given by the parties.

- Expanding the horizon of Africa–EU relations to new areas (e.g. in the partnership on Science, Information Society and Space, partnership on Energy);
- Enhanced political dialogue (e.g. in the field of migration, peace and security, climate change and governance);
- Stronger synergies between the priority actions of some partnerships and African defined and owned priorities (e.g. in the field of election observation; or with regard to the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme);
- Shared analysis of issues and coordination of policy responses (e.g. MDG partnership);
- Search for Joint Positions on a variety of themes and elaboration of Joint Declarations (e.g. on Climate Change, 2008);
- Mobilisation of funding for specific continental and regional programmes;
- On the institutional side, the establishment of the EU Delegation to the African Union has consolidated a collective EU approach to the African Union, provided greater insight from Africa to the challenges of making the JAES work for Europeans, and enhanced day-to-day dialogue.

This joint Assessment Report also recognises several challenges in each of the thematic partnerships. Among those frequently mentioned one finds: “insufficient communication”; “inadequate financial and human resources” (on the African side); “delays in the preparation of consolidated African positions”; “the lack of broad ownership by stakeholders”; the lack of a “dedicated implementation process”; and limited involvement of “Member States, civil society and the private sector”.

Furthermore, in the view of the Joint Task Force “mixed results” have been achieved with regard to the institutional architecture and working methods of the JAES. A big effort has been made to set up the necessary coordination and monitoring bodies within the two Commissions (mandated to be the motor of the JAES), at Council level (mainly on the EU side) and with other stakeholders (Parliaments, non-state actors). However, the report recognises important institutional bottlenecks such as the limitations of the EU–Africa Troika format (as the main body for political guidance); the less than optimal levels of ownership and involvement of key players such as both European and African Member States and the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs); and the insufficient link between the (technical) expert work of the JEGs with (political) decision-making processes.

From an independent perspective, an observant reader is likely to be struck by the primarily ‘technocratic’ nature of the reporting. The general focus in the 2009 Assessment Report is on describing activities, listing roadmaps, steps and support measures taken and presenting future expectations. Moreover, the sections on “challenges and opportunities” are rather technically conceived, focusing on downstream implementation problems (e.g. lack of capacity). In some partnerships, there is a timid probing into the ‘politics’ of the JAES processes, yet this is generally limited to observing a lack of ownership, without analysing why this happens.

The lack of a solid political analysis of the interests at stake in the JAES is particularly visible in sensitive partnerships. Thus, the Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure Partnership extensively reports on meetings, programmes and specific activities. However, no mention is made of the difficulties and tensions existing between both parties in relation to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), which are not formally integrated and discussed in the JAES framework despite being the major strategic issue between Africa and the EU. The Partnership on Climate Change considers the 2008 Joint Declaration as a “major political achievement” but is silent on the political challenges involved in reconciling the diverging interests of both continents on this dossier with strong North-South connotations¹⁶. The subsequent Copenhagen United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in late 2009 clearly illustrated the divisions and lack of agreement between, and to a certain extent within EU and Africa. That is, despite the Joint Declaration in 2008 this was not followed up by “joint action” on the issue in the key global forum (see chapter on the *Political Dialogue Report* on Climate Change).¹⁷ A similar a-political tone prevails in the reporting on the partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment, a policy area still largely determined by national policies and interests, and where there has been little progress within the JAES framework on the substantive political issues between the two continents.¹⁸ Generally there is much information on activities and potential funding opportunities yet no in-depth political analysis of the tensions and diverging interests at play in this critical and divisive policy issue. The list of challenges proposed in the report is also of a technical nature (i.e. the need to address the lack of an African co-chair; greater involvement of non-state actors; better visibility).

In order to assess if stakeholders have endorsed and utilised the JAES as a framework that adds value to existing cooperation, a key question to pose would be whether these Partnerships have generated new dynamics and initiatives (“*Would this have happened if the partnership or the JAES did not exist?*”). If we analyse the results of each thematic partnership, we can see that in many cases the reported achievements are limited to actions or projects that predate the JAES or were already planned¹⁹. These projects and initiatives are, in some cases, the main achievements, while there is no attempt to find better ways of reaching the goals expressed in each thematic partnership, using the specific advantages of the JAES as a multi-stakeholder process at continental level, facilitating the implementation of strategic joint decisions taken in Africa-EU political dialogue. On some themes it is obvious that the most sensitive issues that characterise the EU-Africa relationship are not dealt under the thematic partnerships’ framework but in other *fora*, and that means that the JAES does not see itself as an overarching and privileged framework for the relationship between the two continents.

16 This is reflected amongst others in an African Position on Climate Change, prepared at AU level for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2009 in Copenhagen.

17 Despite this, there may be some validity to Joint Declarations on issues such as Climate Change provided that both parties follow through on any commitments made in them (see chapter on Climate Change).

18 It also seems as if there has been a lowering of the political ambitions of the Second Action Plan on MME. For some commentary on general issues related to this as well as ideas on a way forward see ECDPM comments and questions during the drafting process of the 2nd Action Plan 2011 – 2013 of the Thematic Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment, 16th of September 2010.

19 As examples, we can point out the EU support for electoral processes in Africa (Partnership on Governance), the Trust Fund for Infrastructures (Partnership on Trade), the EC’s contribution to the Fast Track Initiative Fund “Education for all” (Partnership on MDGs).

Box 2: Political Dialogue in the EU–Africa Ministerial Troikas – Addressing Issues of Common Concern?²⁰

There have been 14 official Ministerial Troikas between EU and Africa since 2001. This is a format for political dialogue which arose after the first EU–Africa Heads of State Summit in Cairo in 2000 and which is now conducted every six months. To understand the evolution of the ability of Africa and EU to address issues of common concern, it is useful to reflect on the statements and outcomes of these meetings. While they do not paint the full picture of EU–Africa collaboration, they give some clear insight into the nature of the dialogue and the trajectory of action.

It should come as no surprise that the first EU–Africa Troika meeting held in October 2001 was dominated by the issue of terrorism, coming little over a month after the 11 September attacks. Indeed, here the EU and Africa made a commitment to work together to implement UN Security Council resolution 1373. This was supported by an EU–AU Joint Declaration on terrorism in 2001, and again another one after the 2nd Ministerial Troika in November 2002. It also referred to the importance of supporting existing initiatives to combat terrorism in Africa. In later EU–Africa Ministerial meetings, in 2005, the overarching commitments to addressing terrorism took on a more functional form with the AU informing the EU of its new African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism and welcoming the EU contribution in this regard.

Peace and security is one area where there has been significant discussion at the EU–Africa Ministerial Troikas and these concerns often dominate the agendas of the meetings. Momentum has certainly been building regarding the issue from 2001 onwards, with a number of specific requests noted. The most significant of these was the decision to create an EU funding mechanism – the African Peace Facility – following a specific request from the AU Maputo Summit of 2003. A commitment that has been reiterated consistently relates to working, in the UN context, towards sustainable, flexible and predictable financial support for African-led peacekeeping operations, in particular to follow up on the “Prodi Panel Report” on the topic. In relation to peace and security however, it is usually the individual cases of Somalia and Sudan that make up the agenda. On issues of concern outside of Africa and Europe, Kosovo and Myanmar were mentioned in Ministerial Troikas in 2007. In 2008 Kosovo and Georgia were also placed on the agenda but here Africa again simply “took note” of the EU’s position and presentation rather than forming any joint positions.

Human rights have also been featured in the EU–Africa Ministerial dialogue. An intention to work together on common approaches “especially in the United Nations’ General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights” was first made in the Third Ministerial troika of December 2004. The commitment was followed up by the creation of an expert AU–EU forum to discuss human rights in 2007 and it is unclear what, if any, tangible work alongside the UN materialised on anything beyond an ad hoc basis. The November 2008 Ministerial Troika notes that, “dialogue on human rights has been strengthened”, but independent research indicates that the EU and Africa are frequently taking different positions on human rights issues in UN fora.²¹ The recently established EU–AU Platform for Governance is certainly a step forward in providing a forum for dialogue, and will cover issues more holistically than simply human rights, hopefully allowing for more follow-up, follow through and input to the political level.

The difficult issue of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has also been a part of the EU–Africa Ministerial dialogue since its inception. Although the EU and Africa’s positions on the ICC in relation to Sudanese President El Bashir have diverged, there has been an attempt to bridge this divide in the EU–Africa Ministerial Troika, including the setting up of a joint commission on Universal Jurisdiction. So while there is no agreement, attempts have been made to dialogue about this issue using the Troika format.

Climate change and environmental issues have been a topic on the agenda of the Ministerial Troikas since the second Ministerial Conference in 2002. Again in 2005 it was noted that there was a need to “strengthen cooperation”. Climate change became an explicit concern of the Ministerial Troika in May 2007 where it was noted as a priority area for cooperation under the then forthcoming Joint Africa–EU Strategy. A Joint Declaration on Climate Change adopted in Addis Ababa on 1st December 2008 is noted as an important “early deliverable” of the JAES and there is a comment to use it as a “framework for advancing the Africa–EU common effort regarding the Copenhagen UN Climate Change Conference in December 2009”. In further discussions, the Troika in October 2009 “recall[ed] the AU decision on an African common position highlighting the need for compensation for damages due to climate change” in relation to the COP15 Copenhagen meeting. Another text at this Ministerial Troika on climate change is rather vague with commitments about “capacity building, long-term and coordinated action and facilitating and mobilising support and action on adaptation”. Subsequently it is known that the EU and Africa did not present a united front at the COP15 meeting.

²⁰ The authors are grateful for additional background research on this topic that was undertaken by Natalie Dansdotter, Intern at ECDPM.

²¹ See, Richard Gowan and Franziska Brantner, *The EU and Human Rights at The UN: 2010 review*, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), September 2010 and the previous reviews for 2008 and 2009 available at: <http://www.ecfr.eu>

Different **financing issues** were raised frequently over the years in the political dialogue. One aspect is debt relief. In more direct connection to the JAES, reference has been made regularly not only to the need to improve mobilisation of resources, but also to the need to improve and facilitate better access to the funds available and the existing instruments.²² Another aspect is the adaptation of EU financial instruments to the needs of the JAES. Here the reference has become more specific over the years, from “pursue efforts to ‘treat Africa as one’ and to gradually adapt relevant policies and working arrangements, as well as legal and financial frameworks to the needs and objectives of the partnership”²³ to “on the initiative of the African partners, the possibilities of applying the funding model of the African Peace Facility to other areas of the Action Plan implementation should be examined.”²⁴

In reference to the global financial crisis the EU–Africa Troika meeting noted that “one of the key objectives of the Joint Strategy [is to] jointly promote and sustain a system of effective multilateralism and to address global challenges and common concerns.” The London G20 Summit was welcomed with the statement that “economy recovery was impossible to achieve without strong solidarity between developed and developing countries”. Also, and importantly as it is a tangible deliverable, “they recalled that the Africa–EU partnership had been instrumental to ensure the involvement of the AU, African Union Commission (AUC), and NEPAD Chairman at the London Summit.”²⁵ Yet Europe’s wider strategic interests within the IMF and the World Bank in terms of maintaining its voting share are not mentioned. Concluding the “Doha Development Round of Trade Negotiations and honouring the commitments made, including at the London and Pittsburgh G20 Summits”²⁶ is also noted as important for addressing the economic and financial crisis at the EU–Africa Ministerial Meeting of April 2010. Again it would seem both a European and African interest is noted in that statement.

So what can be said about the political dialogue in the EU–Africa Troika format? There seems to be little discernable difference between what occurred before the Joint Africa–EU Strategy and what has happened since. No discernible change can be gleaned from the official statements in the political dialogue after the second EU–Africa Summit – although the JAES and the Action Plan do provide more of a common framework and point of reference. When issues of global concern like terrorism or the financial crisis come into the international agenda there is a commitment to deal with them together. However, the Troikas seem to suffer from a lack of follow through or follow-up and any joint commitments are vague in nature. This might be explained partly by 1) the lack of clarity on how these Troika processes link to political decision-making processes in the EU or Africa 2) turnover of those representing Africa and the EU. With the coming into effect of the Lisbon Treaty there may be more opportunities for continuity on the European side provided that the new High Representative and Vice President engages and gives political weight to Africa. Analysis of the Troika may also lead to the conclusion that a more thematically focused dialogue is needed at a higher political level than one that can be achieved through this format if real progress is going to be made on issues of “common concern”.

3.2 How to deal with politics, interests and incentives?

The points made in the previous section illustrate a major risk in the JAES implementation process: the perceived gradual dilution of the political substance of the new policy framework. This is in contrast to the original discussions for the JAES where there was a much stronger sense of negotiating political differences. It is reflected in the fact that the JAES finds it difficult (so far) to politically lift up the partnership in exactly the ways it was originally intended, that is to go “beyond Africa”, “beyond cooperation” and “beyond institutions”²⁷. This political dilution should be a matter of concern considering that the added value of the JAES, compared to existing policy frameworks such as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement or bilateral relations, precisely lies in its ambitious political agenda to renew/transform Africa–EU relations in an evolving global political context.

²² EU–Africa Ministerial Meeting Luxembourg, 26 April 2010, p 11.

²³ Joint Progress Report on the implementation of the Africa–EU Joint Strategy and its first Action Plan (2008–2010), 21 November 2008, p 18.

²⁴ EU–Africa Ministerial Meeting Luxembourg, 26 April 2010, p 11.

²⁵ EU Africa Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg, 28 April 2009, p 2.

²⁶ EU Africa Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg, 26 April 2010, p. 4.

²⁷ These are the “three beyonds” the JAES sought to introduce in Africa–EU relations.

The signs on the wall of this ongoing 'dilution' are there and include the following:

"Political dialogue" was put at the centre of the new partnership. It was meant to cover all relevant areas of shared issues and to involve a wider range of institutional actors. There are undoubtedly positive dynamics in some specific areas, with a potential for further development. However, according to most stakeholders, political dialogue as a whole has not yet been substantially improved or expanded under the JAES. It works well in some areas such as Peace and Security on specific issues but this is strongly linked to building on dialogue structures, processes and resources predating the JAES²⁸. In new policy areas progress has been rather limited for a variety of reasons including:

- (i) the tendency to confine political dialogue largely to bi-annual Troika meetings (characterised by overloaded agendas and limited time for matters other than peace and security issues) – see Box 2;
- (ii) the choice of the EU²⁹ to deal with various sensitive matters *outside* the JAES framework (e.g. the EPA processes³⁰, or only selectively and at a low level inside, e.g. migration);
- (iii) difficulties on the African side to elaborate and agree upon regional and continental agendas;
- (iv) duplication of work in other existing multilateral fora (such as the MDGs);
- (v) the objective difficulty for development-oriented EC units (e.g. Directorate-General for Development) to push for a substantial political dialogue on non-development issues (e.g. migration, environment) managed by other parts of the EC (or member-states) with a different culture and confronted with a variety of interests in the policy area in question. This is despite some good and difficult work carried out by DG DEV of the EC to engage and involve non-development units and member-states.

The JAES was expected to establish a ***"continent-to-continent" partnership***. While there is no shortage of institutional links and worthwhile initiatives between the respective Unions/Commissions, it has proven difficult to ensure a focus on pan-African initiatives and on harmonising AU-RECs policy frameworks in the implementation of the JAES. This has even been acknowledged as a persistent problem in terms of implementation of the JAES but despite commitments there is currently little discernable progress.

The JAES has not been instrumental in ***"treating Africa as one"***. If anything, the fragmentation of the Africa-EU relations has increased with the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean and with the potential division of portfolios

²⁸ Thus the existence of an African Peace Facility has proven instrumental in 'federating' actors and interests and promoting political dialogue. One exception is of course the yearly joint meeting of the EU Political and Security Committee (COPS) and the African Union's Peace and Security Council (AU PSC).

²⁹ Depending on the issue at stake, this choice reflected either a political decision from the side of the EU/EC or the lack of suitable conditions to address the topic in the JAES (e.g. the lack of sufficient interest/capacity or political sensitivities with the regions on the African side to meaningfully participate in a dialogue).

³⁰ With regard to EPAs some regions (RECs) have seemed reluctant to give the AUC an effective lead coordinating role, thus somewhat reducing the incentives to deal with the matter in the JAES.

between the new EC and European External Action Service (EEAS)³¹. It also remains to be seen whether the effective implementation of the Lisbon Treaty on the European Union will facilitate greater EU coherence towards Africa. The EEAS having a collective DG for Africa is a good sign, provided its focus is not entirely on security issues. Also on the African side, actors have not spoken with one voice on the issue or used existing dialogue mechanisms to agree on a common African position on a potentially divisive topic³².

Little tangible progress has been achieved in establishing the JAES as the overarching political framework for Africa-EU relations³³. It continues to co-exist, rather uneasily, with other policy frameworks such as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). During the recent revision of the CPA, the EC tabled proposals to better integrate the AU into the ACP framework. The proposals were accepted and the African Union was explicitly mentioned as part of the CPA. Yet much remains to be done to clarify the overall relationship and complementarity between the two policy frameworks (and related interest groups). So far, the parties have also not taken a firm initiative to align existing programming and financial instruments to the JAES nor is there a clear timetable with benchmarks to achieve this. A structured dialogue on how best to set up the envisaged "progressive establishment of a Pan-African financial support programme"³⁴ (to fund the continental ambitions of the JAES) is only at a tentative stage with the EC currently contending that the new EU financial framework in 2013 is the earliest time that it could occur.³⁵

Constructing a new political partnership requires time, experimentation as well as collective learning. Moving the partnership "*beyond aid*" to issues of "*common concern*", deepening the political dialogue or ensuring coherence between existing policy frameworks and the JAES, are all highly political and complex endeavours. Quick fixes and rapid impacts should therefore not necessarily be expected in such a process. Against this background, the focus on "*quick wins*" (in the form of projects, activities, one-off events, ad hoc funding) in the various JAES partnerships risks undermining the long-term goals parties set out for themselves. To some extent, this approach can be understood as there was pressure to show results in order to increase interest and support for the new policy framework. The problem is that the search for quick wins has become so dominant that it tends to transform the JAES into a bureaucratic tool to implement specific (and often unambitious) activities rather than a framework to construct, over time, a new partnership between two continents around shared interests and global agendas (e.g. on peace and security, energy, migration, climate change, the financial crisis). If the level of ambition is lowered then the possibility of engaging on issues of "common concern" at the global stage is lost.

31 It is currently unclear how much of the Pan-African Unit of DG Development will move to the European External Action Service from the European Commission and what implications this will have to EU-Africa relations and EU coherence.

32 There is no shortage of potentially conflicting agendas on the African side. For instance, Northern African States may be attracted to the special benefits offered by ENP and this may prove a more powerful incentive than vaguely defined pan-African agendas. African States and regions may theoretically support the idea of a pan-African envelope, but may at the same time be afraid that this will jeopardise their interests (and part of the overall EU/EC aid budget).

33 There is usually a rhetorical commitment to the JAES in for example the communiqués on the EU Strategic Dialogue with South Africa or the EU-ECOWAS Ministerial Troika in West Africa and the last EU-South Africa Summit in September 2010.

34 See the Joint Africa-EU Strategy as approved during the 2007 Lisbon Summit, par.114.

35 This process is not helped by the difficulties encountered by the AUC in managing an earlier EC support programme of € 55 million.

Levels of ownership tend to be low beyond the inner circle of those concerned with the JAES, particularly among Member States, Parliaments, civil society, local governments, private sector (in both Europe and Africa) as well as among the RECs. While most of these actors strongly lobbied for an inclusive approach during the negotiation process of the JAES, they have been much less active and visible at the implementation level. An overriding reason for this is that many actors do not (yet) perceive that the JAES 'adds value' (in political, operational or financial terms) to existing bilateral and multilateral policy frameworks and instruments. All this means that there are limited incentives to engage in the process (beyond ad hoc events). Further analysis will be needed on how to effectively and efficiently apply the principle of a 'people-centred' JAES, although there have been some recent developments that have brought officially recognised platforms for civil society in Europe and Africa closer together. While lack of progress in this area cannot be laid solely at the door of official parties, it is they who have the most power to ensure the process has the type of political energy and resource allocating power that is likely to gather interest from the already overstretched civil society and private sector.

Depending on the view of the ambitions of the JAES, this state of affairs can either be seen as a transitory implementation problem or as the reflection of a more fundamental crisis affecting the foundations of the JAES. Whichever perspective is taken, an in-depth reflection is needed on the future of the JAES to move forward. Both parties are invited to assess how serious this political dilution is and why it happened. Where does the credibility crisis of the JAES come from? Why are levels of ownership low? How can one explain that the JAES is now primarily driven by bureaucratic incentives (on both sides) rather than by a clear and audacious political agenda, supported by coherent leadership and active support of Member States on both sides?

3.3 The dynamics of political dilution?

If there has been a political "dilution" of the substance then this would certainly have a significant impact on the ability of the JAES to address global issues of "common concern". This paper proposes six possible (inter-related) explanatory factors for the perceived political dilution process, although we acknowledge that stakeholders and other informed observers may have others. They are formulated in questions so as to stimulate an open-ended and constructive debate among all parties and particularly policy-makers in terms of the way forward, rather than as a piece of definitive analysis.

1. To what extent has the political leadership of the JAES implementation process been sufficient? The JAES is unambiguous about the political ambitions it seeks to achieve. The various Action Plans for each thematic area provided a first, inevitably incomplete, roadmap for implementation. In order to translate the lofty objectives of the JAES into practice, ongoing political leadership and engagement at the highest level, on both sides, was set to be crucial all along the implementation process. However, one can question whether sufficient leadership was effectively provided by the AUC, the EC and African and European member states. The perception is that following the 2007 Lisbon Summit, implementation of the JAES was largely delegated to high officials/experts located

in specific units within the two Commissions and officials in member-states heading each thematic partnership. These units and officials invested heavily in the process yet they generally lacked the power and leverage (or support/interest) to move the political agenda of the JAES forward. From their position, they found it difficult to consult, develop and articulate collective interests at the continental level to be furthered as part of a political dialogue on the issues that they were working on. Putting real "interests" on the table rather than projects requires political engagement. These systemic limitations may, quite naturally, have encouraged officials to largely 'avoid' the broader political agendas and fall back on things they could manage at their level. This, in turn, may explain the rapid 'bureaucratisation' of the JAES' process and related focus in quick wins so as to demonstrate that good results were being achieved. At present it is also unclear at the highest political levels within the EU where leadership on dealing with Africa should come from. EU President Van Rompuy has a clear role in all Summits, yet the European Commission President Barroso leads the AUC to EC College-to-College meeting process, and Baroness Ashton is the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice President and would normally represent the EU in the EU-Africa Troika Format replacing the EU revolving presidencies led by member-states. Furthermore, Andris Piebalgs is the European Commissioner for Development – traditionally a position where EC political leadership has come from with regards to sub-Saharan Africa. It should also not be forgotten that on the European and African sides certain Heads of State have in the past offered significant political leadership, which is now less visible than it was in the past. The lack of clarity on political leadership in Africa and Europe with the holistic vision of the JAES at its heart is a concern for its future implementation.

2. To what degree are parties prepared and able to reconcile (diverging) interests through political dialogue? As a fundamentally political partnership, the question of interests is at the heart of the JAES. Between Africa and Europe there may well be shared issues, but not necessarily shared interests (as illustrated through recent positions at the Copenhagen Climate Change conference). This does not negate the value and premise of the JAES as a framework for continental interaction but rather the importance of the quality of a **robust political dialogue** that should create it. While key officials (on both sides) claim that "there are no taboos" in the JAES, it would appear that the JAES has so far not been sufficiently exploited as a political framework through which to creatively articulate, further and protect interests in Africa and in the EU, particularly on sensitive topics where interests may be divergent. As regards the issue of migration, Libya and Italy preferred to make a controversial high-level political and financial agreement to limit those from Africa seeking entry to Europe. France also continued to hold its own Africa Summit which African leaders were happy to attend. Both are examples of how bilateral political agreements continue to triumph over more continental approaches. This reflects the weak political buy-in and ownership so far of the JAES in Europe and Africa. It also suggests that the parties are still struggling to apply the 'JAES spirit', i.e. to open up the political dialogue to *all* issues of concern for each continent and to arrive at a truly *joint* agenda-setting. This does not necessarily mean that the EU and Africa have to seek and come up with joint answers and positions on all subjects, but it implies that there is a robust dialogue that allows both parties to understand different positions, clarify perspectives and, eventually, promote common understandings. This also illustrates further problems regarding the ability of Africa

and Europe to articulate continental common interests within themselves, leading to a shortfall of strategy on both sides and the lack of an agreed continental agenda with which to negotiate with the other. Furthermore, analysis on specific issues has shown that far from working more closely together in global forums on issues of “common concern” such as human rights, Europe and Africa have actually become further apart in their voting patterns.³⁶

3. Inclusive partnership to include “actors” or “experts”? One of the potential strengths of the JAES is its focus on inclusiveness. This reflects a welcome recognition that all relevant actors need to play a part in the construction of different types of Africa–EU relations. Yet organising such a multi–actor partnership has proven to be a complex matter. Currently, the JAES architecture is generally perceived to be far too heavy, cumbersome and inflexible. There is also a disturbing blurring of roles and responsibilities between “actors” (i.e. institutions with formal political mandates) and “experts” (i.e. individuals with specific competencies and/or representing particular interests). This confusion of roles is manifest in the functioning of the JEGs, where both sets of players are mixed up (e.g. with Parliaments being invited to participate as ‘experts’). This has reduced both the legitimacy and effectiveness of the JEGs but has a wider implication for the ability of the JAES to actually address issues of common concern (see Box 3). In its current form, it seems improbable that the JEGs would be the forum in which genuinely political issues of common concern could be discussed as the first step to becoming common positions at the global level that could actually be followed through on.

Box 3: The mandate of Joint Expert Groups – Mission impossible?

The informal Joint Expert Groups (JEGs) are seen as the motors to implementing the JAES. Under the political steering of the Troika, they are tasked to carry out crucial technical work regarding implementation, coordination, mobilisation of actors and resources. It was expected that the work of the experts could be linked back to the political level, resources and implementation agencies.

It is now widely acknowledged that this scheme has not worked well, even by the EU–Africa Troika/Political Dialogue meeting on the future of the JAES, in April 2010. In most cases, the JEGs’ ability to ‘make things happen’ proved rather weak as a result of limited clarity on: (i) their structural links to the political level, (ii) resources at their disposal, (iii) connection to implementation (e.g. existing programming cycles) and (iv) membership issues. In the absence of ongoing political guidance, the JEGs are largely left on their own to implement the JAES, with ambiguous mandates and roles, stretching far beyond their remit as an informal technical body of experts. One of the weaknesses of the JEGs is in limited participation and engagement, both in Europe and Africa. There are few incentives for “experts” to attend JEGs other than a bureaucratic imperative – even then it is unclear what kind of continental or regional mandate the participants have. All this suggests the JEGs suffer from a structural design flaw, requiring fundamental adjustments.

4. Incentives for effective implementation: invest in processes or projects? The political vision of the JAES is couched in language with strong ‘process’ connotations. There is much talk about constructing a new partnership, defining common agendas, supporting the pan–African architecture, building coherence, etc. These are all, by nature, process outcomes to be achieved over a longer period of time. Yet in practice the JAES has been under heavy pressure to deliver quick outcomes in the form of ‘projects’. While the concern for tangible outcomes is perfectly le-

³⁶ For detailed research on this see Richard Gowan and Franziska Brantner, *The EU and Human Rights at The UN: 2010 review*, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), September 2010.

gitimate, the parties still need to find a way to reconcile the search for short-term results with the inherently political and long-term objectives of the JAES.

5. Are both parties open to a real change in the 'culture' of cooperation? The JAES goals are to move from the previous EU-Africa relationship based on donor-recipient roles into a modern partnership geared to managing and reconciling common interests and global challenges. This means addressing a wide range of new issues "beyond aid" that are not historically a part of the regular EU-Africa policy dialogue conducted by these institutions. The entire JAES approach therefore profoundly challenges existing norms and ways of working of institutions in Africa and Europe that have been established over decades and have a longer historical legacy in the history of colonialism and liberation. Most of the dialogue is still focused on "how Europe can help Africa" and the Strategy is still regarded, both by the European and the African sides, as a space for the aims and actors of "Development", when one of its goals is exactly to go "Beyond Aid". This means that any efforts to improve EU-Africa relations and the JAES should also consider the following questions: To what extent have European and African officials been empowered to work creatively or differently on EU-Africa relations because of the JAES? Has there been sufficient leadership to drive the required institutional change process? Have the necessary incentives been put in place to gradually transform traditional behaviour, adapt mindsets, rethink dialogue approaches, adjust working methods and develop new institutional arrangements? What steps have been considered to 'open up' the traditional aid sector (on both sides) to think in a different, broader way? What has been done to bring non-traditional development actors 'on board'?

6. Were the asymmetries in capacities between the two Unions adequately considered? The African Union, with its expanded mandate to promote pan African integration agendas, was launched in 2002. Inevitably, there is still a way to go before these continental structures, processes and capacities are fully in place and working. In addition, in many African countries bureaucracies do not have the same resources at their disposal as EU member-states. Whereas many EU states can field hundreds of bureaucrats specifically working on Africa and thematic issues related to Africa and the JAES – the same is obviously not true of African countries. The lack of capacities on the African side has repercussions at several levels in the JAES and it becomes evident in the thematic partnerships, where the African position is often reactive instead of being proactive, given problems regarding the degree of participation of African actors and an evident shortage of human resources at the AU, which is usually overloaded with several actions and partnerships. The asymmetry between the EU and the AU in terms of resources and capacities often results in a tendency for the EU to take it upon itself to be the 'dominant partner' of the partnership, which sometimes leads to negative reactions from the African side. At EU level, the high expectations generated by the creation of the AU has increased the pressure to make decisions, in large quantities and quickly, at the risk of overloading the AU's already limited capacities. This results in a dilemma between the need to implement the JAES priority actions and to make progress in terms of policies and decisions, on the one hand, and, on the other, to ensure that the time needed to sustainably strengthen the AU's structure and its internal experience is granted. How was this reality reflected in the JAES process and in the demands the stakeholders made of each other?

The combined effect of these factors may help to explain the difficult start of the JAES and the resulting gradual 'political dilution' of the new partnership framework.³⁷ In general, we can see that, on the one hand, several African actors/sectors are still sceptical about the motivations of European actions. While there is some fear that political dialogue can replace development cooperation, others point to the JAES as an EU attempt to invert the growing presence of China and other emergent actors in Africa. On the other hand, some European actors are worried about the real African capacities to move forward with the Joint Strategy and about Africans' political will to talk about politically sensitive issues, while some have the perception that African actors may be interested only in actions involving a financial contribution from Europe. Despite all the efforts of dedicated units, particularly at the level of both Commissions, the JAES does not seem to be making headway as the overarching political framework needed to modernise and transform Africa-EU relations. If anything, stakeholders tend to (informally) agree that the JAES is functioning as a 'stand-alone', primarily bureaucratic process, without strong political clout or suitable financial resources to make things happen, providing limited added value compared to existing multilateral and bilateral policy frameworks.

4. The continuing relevance of the JAES vision

Between 2007 and 2010, the JAES has not yet managed to become a critical instrument to change political dialogue dynamics between the two continents and move towards a global and more strategic partnership. However, it also appears that the current difficulties experienced by the JAES are linked to fundamental political choices in the implementation strategies followed so far rather than to the validity of the overall vision underlying the search for a renewed Africa-EU partnership.

The vision of the JAES founders – to establish a strengthened political partnership between two Unions – seems even more pertinent now than in 2007. A wide range of geopolitical events in the global arena make it clear that both continents badly need a JAES to manage crucial interdependencies.

- First, the financial crisis and the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change have shown that national attempts at solving issues are a thing of the past for both African and European stakeholders. In an era of globalisation, there is a significant need for platforms (such as the JAES) where parties can collectively further their interests and enter into a political dialogue with others to pursue them and negotiate and follow-through on common positions.
- Second, there is a clear (albeit slow) move towards greater integration on both continents, reflected in the Lisbon Treaty in Europe and the AU in Africa. To achieve global and continental outcomes it makes no sense for the political dialogue and interaction between the two continents to move in the opposite direction towards fragmented bilateral relations. While in the short run this may be easier to manage, in the long run it will undermine collective interests.

³⁷ For other examples of more critical analysis of the achievements of the JAES process (including from EARN members) see, Oladiran Bello, *The EU-Africa partnership: At a strategic crossroads – FRIDE Policy Brief, No. 47, May 2010*. <http://www.fride.org/publication/766/a-crucial-moment-in-eu-africa-relations> and Daniel Bach, "The EU 's 'strategic partnership' with Africa: Model or Placebo?", in Osita Eze & Amadu Sesay, eds., *The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: Implications for Nigeria and Africa*, Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 2010, forthcoming.

- Third, the global governance systems are also evolving rapidly, as exemplified by the rise of the new G20 structure. This creates opportunities for joint Africa–EU cooperation on global issues, which could be mediated through the JAES.
- Fourth, the steady rise of new actors (China, Brazil and India) invites Europe to rethink its position and overall approach towards Africa in order to remain a relevant partner.

A well–implemented JAES could be an effective instrument to broker a new relationship based on common interests and provide real added value (compared to what other international players offer). Expectations would need to be modest but a small amount of progress could go a long way to addressing continental issues.

5. Trends before the 3rd EU–Africa Summit

In 2010, in recognition of the nature of the challenges with the JAES and with a mandate for a “fundamental review of the Action Plan” from the October 2009 Troika, both parties have formulated *reform proposals* that go beyond mere technical adjustments. These include, amongst others, the need to (i) concentrate JAES efforts primarily on continental and regional priorities; (ii) ensure that JAES activities are better aligned to existing (pan–) African policies, programmes and strategies; (iii) promote the full participation of the RECs (by ensuring that their priorities are taken on board and supported by the JAES); (iv) mainstream, where possible and relevant, the JAES in national structures and cooperation processes; (v) strengthen the political and policy dialogue; (vi) enhance the steering mechanisms and streamline the implementation arrangements; and (vii) improve communication on the JAES.

Arising from this, the April 2010 Troika meeting in Luxembourg endorsed the *Draft Joint Paper – Options for improving the implementation of the Joint Africa–EU Strategy*.³⁸ Specifically it was confirmed that “[b]oth sides agree, in view of the political nature of the [JAES], not to reopen the Strategy text”, meaning that there would be no official lowering or heightening of ambition, while also recognising that there was no political appetite to renegotiate the text, nor the feeling that it was necessary to do so. On the next Action Plan itself, despite calls to narrow the focus of thematic areas or priority actions by some stakeholders, there was a commitment to keep all areas and seemingly all priorities. The more radical overhaul for the JAES that some actors privately thought should occur has not happened. There was however a call for the JAES to focus on activities with, “a proven buy–in of a critical mass of competent actors on both sides, including the necessary political, human and financial resources.” In relation to the JEGs there is a further realisation that there needs to be a balance between, “political dialogue and policy with the development dimension in order to ensure that these mutually reinforce each other and that both European and African strategic interests [are met]”. This would seem to indicate that there is an official recognition that in the past this has not been the case. With regard to the content of the second Action Plan of the JAES, it is reported that the more bottom–up

³⁸ Annex to the 14th EU–Africa Ministerial Meeting – Draft Joint Options Paper, Options for improving the implementation of the Joint Africa–EU Strategy, Brussels, 23 April 2010. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/114049.pdf

process of definition of projects in the JEGs has led to a promising agenda for cooperation over the next three years. Yet it remains to be seen whether these projects will really deliver on the bold political ambitions set out in 2007.

There was also commitment in the *Joint Options Paper* to, "further strengthen political dialogue and development cooperation by **enhancing frequency, scope and effectiveness of thematic policy dialogue in key priority areas.**" The September 2010 Declaration of the First High Level Meeting of the Africa–EU Energy Partnership seems to offer an indication of a way forward for the JAES.³⁹ The declaration clearly includes specific commitments that are of interest to Africa, then to Europe, and finally to both parties on the issue of energy as well as covering climate change. Indeed it would seem that this thematic specific high level format (rather than the overcrowded general EU–Africa Ministerial/Political Dialogue format) may be the way to get progress made on issues of common concern that has proved so illusive over the past three years. As was noted at the energy event, it was the first ministerial level meeting of any of the eight African–European partnerships agreed upon in Lisbon in 2007. Yet for even these types of meetings to really bear fruit they have to be well prepared with the appropriate level of political support and participation and concern all thematic areas genuinely of interest to both Africa and Europe. Also, although no reference to the JAES process was made, the recent Joint Communiqué from the Ministerial Meeting on Piracy and Maritime Security in the Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region and the EU High Representative of the 6 October 2010 also offers some insight on how cooperation on issues of concern can be framed. This is seen as mutually beneficial and in line with existing African commitments on maritime security rather than simply as an EU concern for piracy.⁴⁰ In addition, the **EU–Africa Governance Platform** also appears to be moving forward after a long period of difficult negotiation and limited progress with a successful meeting in September 2010 in Addis Ababa.⁴¹ Again, this forum could also supply a platform to nourish the political level on related issues – including at the global level. There is also a European and African civil society organisations (CSO) continental dialogue taking place before the Summit, moving forward a long process that had long been stalled not by official parties but by the very action of the CSO groups. Yet the ultimate success of any of these initiatives has to be judged on the follow through to impact rather than simply agreement on formats or declarations before they can be fully held up as triumphs in addressing issues of "common concern".

A commitment contained in the *Joint Options Paper* is to "consider as **appropriate major global and regional events**". The same goes for the collaboration in forums such as the United Nations as the *Joint Options Paper* notes, "we agree that there is a need for additional arrangements in order to improve our dialogue in multilateral fora in view of establishing a structured dialogue". Yet the EU suffered a setback in its bid in September 2010 to gain observer status in the United Nations with most African states voting against this.

In terms of concrete measures the *Joint Options Paper* does however note the need to consider "the progressive establishment of a **Pan–African financial sup-**

³⁹ Declaration of the First High Level Meeting of the Africa–EU Energy Partnership, Vienna, 14 September 2010

⁴⁰ See, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/116942.pdf

⁴¹ For a description of the meeting and a link to the background papers produced and agenda see, ECDPM Weekly Compass, 17th of September 2010 editors pick feature available at: [http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/077EEF538778F7BD1C12577A1004DEAED/\\$FILE/309_Weekly_Compas--Issue_50--17_September_2010.pdf](http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/077EEF538778F7BD1C12577A1004DEAED/$FILE/309_Weekly_Compas--Issue_50--17_September_2010.pdf)

port program", and also examine "possibilities of applying the funding model of the African Peace Facility to other areas of the Action Plan implementation." While the JAES was supposed to go beyond "donor-recipient" kind of relations, there can be no denying that aligned resources can help address issues of "common concern" as has been witnessed in the peace and security field.

The *Joint Options Paper* was discussed in the **new format for the Joint EU-Africa Troika** with the entering into force of the EU Treaty of Lisbon. The role previously being taken by the revolving EU "Troika" of EU member-states is now being fulfilled by Baroness Ashton as EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President of the EC. The African side chose to retain their full Troika format. The formal role given to the EU High Representative in leading the Troika, along with supervising the European External Action Service (EEAS), has wider implications for EU-Africa cooperation⁴². The first post-Lisbon Treaty Troika meeting made it clear that the way the formal changes play out in practice will be seen in the longer run only, while the interest and capacity of the HR and the EEAS (which is still yet to be fully established) to engage in the EU-Africa dossier seems limited to classical EU strategic and security interests at the moment.

There was agreement on the overarching theme of **"Investment, Economic Growth and Job Creation"** for the 3rd Summit by mid 2010. Yet, some key differences in the **priority issues to be raised and discussed at the Summit** came to the fore. The expectations differ in general insofar as the EU side seems to be interested in a smoothly run event that serves as a public display of its engagement and investment, while the AU side seems keen to bring some key concerns including contentious issues to the attention of a wider audience. In September 2010 the European Commissioner for Development gave a positive diagnosis of the state of EU-Africa relations, stating that "now is the time to *consolidate our partnership*, based on what we have already achieved together" since the last Summit.⁴³ He called again for the EU and Africa to work together on the global stage but mentioned no past successes specifically. While talking about the *importance of economic issues*, no mention was made of the major contentious issue between Africa and Europe – EPAs – although several African sources report intentions to put this on the agenda of the next EU-Africa Summit. Some analysts note the entire EPA process is in 'disarray' and it will require concessions from both sides and higher level of political engagement with strategic vision to put the process back on track.⁴⁴ It is progress on these difficult thematic issues that will be the real test of the partnership in the coming year. The European Commission will outline its new vision for engagement with Africa in a communication before the Summit. How much this will build on the JAES process or simply outline a new vision for the Commission's development engagement in Africa remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, the President of the AUC, in a speech in September 2010⁴⁵, mentioned a number of key concerns that the AU would like to discuss and find joint

⁴² For an overview see ECDPM Implications of the Treaty of Lisbon for EU-Africa relations. Background paper ECDPM for AUC "Friday's at the Commission" meeting forthcoming 2010.

⁴³ Andris Piebalgs, European Commissioner for Development, *Partnership Africa: New Horizons for EU and Inter-African Cooperation*, SPEECH/10/485, 27th of September 2010.

⁴⁴ See, San Bilal and Isabelle Ramdoo, *Losing old friends: The risk of an EPA backlash*, *Trade Negotiations Insights* · Volume 9, Number 8, October 2010.

⁴⁵ Ping, Jean (2010) Speech by Dr Jean Ping, President of the African Union Commission delivered at the opening of the high-level EU-Africa conference "*Partenariat pour le développement et la sécurité*", held at the Belgian Senate in Brussels on 16 September, available at <http://appablog.wordpress.com/2010/09/16/ouverture-de-la-conference-de-haut-niveau-union-europeenne-afrique-%C2%ABpartenariat-pour-le-developpement-et-la-securite%C2%BB-discours-de-se-le-dr-jean-ping-president-de-la-commission-de-l/>

solutions for in Tripoli. He called for *political decisions, i.e.* to speed up the adaptation of EU financial instruments (including establishment of a pan-African envelope, mechanisms to facilitate 'treating Africa as one'), to put in place an EU fund for an "African Integration Facility" (as requested by the AU Summit in July 2010), to realise a flagship project with visibility in all five RECs, to facilitate the issuing of entry visas to the EU, especially for African researchers, academics and students, and to address the foreign debt of Africa. In addition, the AUC President mentioned the need to establish an AU-EU crisis management mechanisms, and further EU support for the participation of Africa in global governance (G20, G8, UNSC reform, International Financial Institutions reform).

6. Back to Basics: Promoting the JAES added-value

The future of EU-Africa relations will not be determined by the JAES and the successes or failures of the JAES or the next EU-Africa Summit alone. Yet if EU and Africa cannot make some progress on JAES' goals that they themselves set up, then it does not bode well for the future of relations at the continental level.

The tendency to downplay and remove the more systemic (political) issues affecting the JAES may reflect a sense of realism – among both parties – of what is most feasible at this stage. Yet it is difficult to see how the JAES can live up to its original vision and expectations if these issues are not included and addressed in the near future. This would imply agreeing and engaging at the highest levels upon a 'political roadmap' (not one solely of projects) indicating the processes that need to be organised to put in place the structural conditions for an effective functioning of the JAES. Some of the concrete steps to implement this broader political reform agenda and to create an enabling environment for the JAES are proposed in Box 4. While some of these are acknowledged by both parties, they will require real commitment to follow them through to action.

Box 4: Fulfilling the JAES mandate and vision: some concrete steps

1) Reinvalidate the political agenda of the JAES:

- Give a clear explicit and implicit political mandate to frankly and honestly discuss and confront both successes and implementation problems of the JAES to date. Try to agree on the (pre-) conditions that are required for the JAES to achieve its full potential⁴⁶.
- Firmly align JAES behind already agreed continental positions and programmes in Europe and Africa (such as the African Union's Strategic Plan) but also AU brokered positions in other thematic areas.
- Jointly explore ways and means to elevate the JAES beyond the Commission-to-Commission dialogue to a real partnership owned by African and European Member States. One way of doing this is for both Commissions to consult member states and reflect on their internal agendas and on the specific and concrete issues they wish to be part of future continental political dialogues. Choose to pursue these at a high level in a limited amount of fields aligned to the thematic partnerships where the buy-in is likely to be the highest and where the JAES can add real value.

⁴⁶ Inspiration could be drawn from the JAES Peace and Security Partnership. There is agreement that the JAES has helped to further deepen cooperation between the two Unions in this critical area. Yet this was possible because there was already some kind of an enabling environment for effective dialogue and collaboration in place. Thus, the JAES Peace and Security Partnership could benefit from (i) the existence of continental agendas; (ii) a set of specific institutional arrangements on both sides allowing for peer-to-peer interactions; (iii) clarified relations between the AU and the RECs; (iv) the availability of dedicated and aligned funding; and (v) active engagement of member-states. Building blocks as these are also necessary for other partnerships to deliver over time.

- Look to engage or continue to engage the highest political clout (Ministerial level) in the different ‘themes’ covered by the JAES in Europe and Africa (on Energy, Migration, etc).
- Accept and factor in that continental positions both in Europe and Africa take time to develop; joint positions that are not “well grounded” at the start are unlikely to be sustainable.
- Address contentious issues (Zimbabwe, ICC, EPA) while ensuring that they do not slow down/derail the overall JAES dialogue in other areas.
- Clarify during the Summit where the higher level political leadership in the EU/EC (beyond the Development Commissioner) and the AU/AUC (beyond the Department of Economic Affairs) on the JAES is going to come from and ensure active and sustained engagement from that level.
- Jointly define a relevant political agenda beyond the next Summit focusing on core topics that are likely to dominate the partnership and require bold responses (e.g. the financial crisis, the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit, etc.). This, in turn, should help to prove that the JAES provides an adequate political framework to address (controversial/divisive) policy issues head on.
- Clarify unambiguously the role of civil society in the JAES including in the partnerships then challenge and encourage civil society to effectively organise itself in Europe and in Africa and to engage.

2) Use appropriate processes and institutional forums to push forward the JAES:

- Identify, support and utilise legitimate continental and regional processes and forums (within Europe and Africa) that can articulate sustainable (not ad hoc) common positions on shared interests (e.g. the AU Peace and Security Council, the EU Political & Security Committee (COPS), COAFR in Europe, Permanent Representative Council (PRC) in Africa (including PRC Sub-Committee for Multilateral Affairs).
- Confine the role of the JEGs to providing an inclusive consultative forum and organise clear lines of political leadership, decision-making and accountability at the level of appropriate joint AU-EU-member states committees to be clearly identified for each partnership.

3) Ensure greater coherence among various policy frameworks dealing with Africa

- Jointly raise, in appropriate fora, the question of compatibility/complementarity of the JAES with the ACP framework (over time). Enter into a structured dialogue on how the two frameworks could be made more compatible. This needs to happen among the ACP group as much as it needs to occur within Europe.
- The EU, the AU and the governments of the Maghreb and Mashrak should enter into a dialogue on how the European Neighbourhood Policy and Instrument could be made more compatible with the JAES.
- Member States on both sides should undertake to review their national policies towards the continent with a view to ensuring greater coherence and synergies with the JAES.

4) Think creatively about sustainable sources of joint funding for the JAES

- The first pre-requisite is to *not* think in the old ways of mobilising (new) donor money, but rather to ensure much better transparency, utilisation, ease of access and alignment of existing resources.
- “Cost” the tangible priorities in the second Action Plan: it is a general management principle that action plans without a cost estimate lack credibility. Costing the action plan does not require immediate commitment and identification of joint resources but does clarify the level of ambition.
- Start the dialogue to consider sustainable funding strategies for the continental agenda of the JAES.
- Identify the challenges to be overcome in order to establish a dedicated pan-African envelope linked to the JAES, to be jointly funded and managed by the EU and AU (possibly using the funding model of the Africa Peace Facility to ensure ownership within Africa).

The transformation of the JAES – from a sum of projects towards a more structured and process-based relationship and from a technocratic exercise towards a more strategic dialogue – requires a solid and profound analysis of the interests, incentives as well as ‘drivers of change’ that can contribute to address head on the more fundamental political bottlenecks to effectively implement what has emerged over the past two years. They concern thorny questions such as: how should one specifically tackle the ownership deficit (especially from Member States and RECs)? What incentives may push both sides to consistently use the JAES framework for a substantial political dialogue (including for sensitive issues where interests diverge)? Are parties willing to define a clear roadmap to gradually transform the JAES into the ‘overarching’ framework for Africa–EU relations? Can they agree on the steps required to ensure effective coherence between the JAES and existing agreements, policies and instruments (with their respective vested interests on both sides)? What type of strategic and sustainable funding could be mobilised in Europe and Africa to ensure implementation of the JAES’ political objectives while simultaneously addressing the problems of ‘absorption capacity’ at the level of the AUC?

Insights for such an analysis of the interests, incentives and ‘drivers of change’ could be gained for example from trying to understand the characteristics of partnerships or priority areas where cooperation in the past three years has made satisfactory progress. An attempt to understand some of these success factors is made in Box 5. By building on these factors and being realistic about the possibilities of progress it would be possible to move forward.

Box 5: Identifying success factors for cooperation in the JAES framework

In general, more progress seems to have been achieved in relation to actions and partnerships where the following elements can be found:

- The pre-existence of dialogue between the two continents before the launching of the Joint Strategy (e.g. Peace and Security).
- The recognition of issue/theme as an important common problem about which there was already an ongoing effort to formulate continental agendas, in both the EU and African side (e.g. climate change, energy).
- The recognition of the JAES as the most adequate forum for concerting positions between Europeans and Africans on a particular issue (e.g. the negative examples of the Partnership on MDG and the Partnership on Trade, where the most important questions are addressed in other *fora*).
- The leadership and an indisputable mandate for the continental organisation are in place. For the EU this is problematic in the area of migration that remains the primary domain of member-states, and for the AU it is problematic in trade where the RECs and the member-states have more of a mandate. This can result in very little progress in formulation of robust common positions – so political dialogue at continental level can be of limited value; negotiations are only fruitful/ promising for follow through at regional or more likely the national level.
- A continental architecture is in place – a positive example of the Partnership on Peace and Security that can build on an articulated continental architecture (the African Peace and Security Architecture) and on a Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and RECs; the EU has also its emerging Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy.
- An adaptation of the institutional framework, working methods and information/communication to the Partnership’s particularities (e.g. the mechanisms of information sharing within the Partnership on Peace and Security, the use of the EUEI Partnership Dialogue Facility for technical support in the Partnership on Energy, etc).
- The level at which the discussions take place, depending on the degree of participation and effective engagement of experts and Member States from each side – a positive example would be the recent high-level meeting on energy.
- The availability of targeted financial resources (e.g. the African Peace Facility in the Peace and Security, the EU–ACP Partnership on Energy).

In terms of moving forward, notwithstanding learning the aforementioned lessons, significant questions remain for both Africa and Europe. From a European perspective this soul-searching exercise should probe into questions such as: how much of a geopolitical priority is Africa for Europe in the coming years? Can the EU develop and maintain genuinely common positions in its dialogue with Africa or is further fragmentation likely to prevail (with a Community-driven JAES' process co-existing with other policy frameworks and bilateral policies)? How much political support is there for the idea to effectively treat Africa as one or for the declared objective to bring more coherence into the policy frameworks and instruments dealing with Africa? Who is prepared to champion these reforms (beyond the EC) and promote the institutional innovations to make it work? Can the European Council and EU President Van Rompuy better define the collective Union's strategic objectives and interests? What can be expected from the EEAS in the post-Lisbon configuration? Is Europe willing to think about new ways to move forward difficult issues such as the EPAs, ICC, Migration, Zimbabwe?

Also on the African side there are no shortage of 'existential' questions to be addressed. How do African member-states collectively see the future of the ACP and its relationship to the JAES? The AUC may call for a unified approach to Africa and a pan-African envelope of financial resources, but for this to happen it will have to muster sufficient political support among its Member States and RECs, who will have to speak with one voice in Brussels on the topic. This has been conspicuously absent so far and it is the primary responsibility of African states and their regional/continental bodies to foster this agenda. This, in turn, will require concerted efforts to articulate, elaborate and follow through on clear pan-African agendas, from the bottom up, in line with national and regional interests that have credibility on a range of policy issues. Clarity should also be provided on how and in what form the African side will co-finance this Joint Strategy (so as to avoid falling into the traditional donor-recipient approach). Finally is Africa also willing to think about new ways to move forward on similar difficult issues such as EPAs, ICC, Migration, or Zimbabwe?

Conclusions

Over the past three years the Joint Africa-EU Strategy process has not significantly fulfilled its stated goal to deliver more action on issues of common concern. Most of the examples of genuine progress on issues of common concern resulting from the JAES are too few, too new and not of a different character than those that existed beforehand. There are clear structural reasons for the political dilution of the JAES that have led to this, as noted in the paper, which could be addressed by providing political leadership and energy. However, there are also wider issues of geopolitics, the weight of history and different interests that have also undermined the ability of Europe and Africa to act together on issues of common concern.

The JAES process, however, when compared to other multilateral initiatives such as the Union for the Mediterranean, can claim to have delivered more.⁴⁷ Also,

⁴⁷ For a brief commentary on the Union for the Mediterranean see, Balfour, Rosemary. "Euro-Mediterranean blues", *European Policy Centre Commentary*, 6th of June 2010.

such a politically complex and ambitious undertaking should not be dismissed because it has not lived up to its ideals after only three years. Some trends in governance, energy, and peace and security are positive, which demonstrate that there can be a minimum level of understanding on some global issues that provide common ground for discussing a set of shared concerns. Yet there is much more work to be done.

The actions (or inactions) of policy makers from both continents (respective Commissions and Member States) will determine whether the JAES and the goals they set themselves in 2007 will contribute to the transformation of EU–Africa relations over the next few years or whether we will have “more of the same”. The ball is in their court before, during and after the 3rd EU–Africa Summit. However, the responsibility for “making the JAES work” as intended should not only be ‘dumped’ on the respective Commissions, or merely transferred on the European side to the EEAS. It is a shared responsibility between the African and European Institutions, Member States as well as all other key stakeholders (RECs, Parliaments, civil society, local governments, and private sector).

Yet if the search for a coherent, overarching framework for a renewed Africa–EU partnership was to lose momentum, much would be lost and in a few years’ time a similar framework may have to be reinvented to deal with global agendas and major cooperation challenges between the two continents. This is particularly the case if Africa wishes to gain a greater and stronger collective voice in international affairs, and if Europe wants to fulfil the potential of its new EU Treaty of Lisbon and become more of a player in global affairs with a “strategy” as well as strategic partners. Neither the status quo for the EU–Africa relation nor a further fragmentation is likely to serve either continents’ mid and long-term interests in an increasingly globalised world.