

THE JOINT AFRICA-EU STRATEGY

1. The joint Africa-EU Strategy: a partnership without any tangible results

The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was adopted in December 2007 during the Lisbon Summit by 53 African and 27 European Heads of State and Government. This strategy is based on principles such as equality, unity of Africa and interdependence. In order to implement the joint strategy political commitments, the African and EU States drafted a **first action plan (2008-2010) with a strong focus on 8 sectoral partnerships** (peace and security; democratic governance and human rights; trade, regional integration and infrastructures; Millennium Development Goals - MDGs: food security, health and education; energy; climate change; migration, mobility and employment; science, information society and space). While building on some lessons learned during the first three years of implementation, a **second action plan (2011-2013)** was adopted during the third EU-Africa Summit in Libya.

Despite the strategy and its action plans' innovative nature, **a number of challenges** have arisen over the five implementation years **preventing the African and EU ambitious commitments to be fulfilled**:

- **The lack of a real political leadership**: until now, the EU and African Union (AU) Commissions have been the key drivers of the strategy; while the Member States from each of the two continents were weakly related to the leadership;
- **Common challenges but conflicting interests**: although Europe and Africa have common issues, these are not always shared interests;
- **The questioning of the joint strategy added-value**: the joint strategy provides a framework within which many initiatives, projects and programmes are already undertaken in other joint structures or dialogue processes between African and EU States but does not promote new forms of cooperation;
- **The lack of participation of various stakeholders, including civil society**: the political dialogue was often restricted to the EU and AU Commissions, excluding many key actors (Member States, parliaments, civil society, private sector)
- **The lack of funding** was considered as a major problem from the start: although funds were invested, on the one hand, by the EU via pre-existing funding instruments, external to the strategy, and, on the other hand, by the AU via the support programme to the AU Commission under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), the joint strategy does not seem to offer a viable opportunity in the long run and is not likely to give any concrete results.

2. What does the future hold for the post-2014 Joint Africa-EU Strategy?

In the light of the difficulties that the Joint Africa-EU Strategy is facing due to the lack of concrete deliverables in implementing the Action Plans and the 8 sectoral partnerships, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission have suggested to the African Union to abandon the 8 existing sectoral partnerships in favour of 3 main objectives: a common effort for peace, democracy and human rights, an enhanced cooperation on sustainable development and inclusive growth - notably focusing on job creation, mobility, migration, free movement of goods, services and capital, infrastructure, natural resources management and the development of knowledge; and finally an enhanced coordination on global themes such as climate change, gender, human rights, trade, etc. The idea is to avoid as much as possible the creation of ad-hoc groups and to mobilize existing mechanisms and bodies to develop these themes.

According to the EEAS and the European Commission, this new structure would ensure the success of the African-EU partnership as well as concrete deliverables. It would benefit from human resources able to make decisions and monitor its implementation.

3. Two new EU financial instruments to revitalize the Joint Africa-EU Strategy

In order to overcome market deficiencies, the European Commission is proposing in its Communication, « A budget for Europe 2020»¹, the set up of a €1 billion pan-African instrument, under the development cooperation instrument (DCI 2014-2020). This new financial instrument would support the achievements of the JAES and would focus on transregional and continental levels activities.

Pending the adoption and the implementation of the pan-African instrument, the European Commission created a support mechanism to the JAES (2012-2014). This support mechanism has been granted €10 million by the intra-ACP envelope under the

¹ COM(2011) 500 Final, Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, « A budget for Europe 2020», Brussels, 29.6.2011

10th EDF and aims at achieving tangible results through a better implementation of the action plan 2011-2013 and the 8 sectoral partnerships.

This mechanism is the initial response to the Joint Africa-EU Strategy's democratic deficit. The allocation of €8.05 million to the technical assistance whose role would be to provide administrative support to civil society and the allocation of €1.55 million to the activities proposed by a broad range of African and European actors – including civil society – should allow to reflect on the future of the Joint Strategy and the preparations of the upcoming EU-Africa Summit.

But these new mid and long term means raise different issues:

- Will the amounts for the financial packages be sufficient to launch and maintain a momentum that will achieve significant outcomes?
- How will these funds be managed: will they be handled by the European Commission, having therefore a degree of information asymmetry between partners in the decision-making power?
- How to prevent the risk of duplication with other financial instruments (EDF, DCI, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument)?
- Will funds available to civil society benefit from flexible mechanisms that stimulate genuine joint activities between Africa and Europe?

4. The role of parliaments and civil society

It is fundamental that parliaments and civil society of both continents take part to the reform of the strategy but also find within the latter a place and a role enabling them to have a real impact on the directions it will take. In this area, the support shown by the European and African decision-makers to the organization of the civil society Intercontinental Forum (October 2014) – in the run to the Head of States Summit (April 2014), is gratifying. Similar efforts at parliamentary level would also be welcomed. These dynamics should lead to mechanisms enabling the involvement of parliamentarians and civil society within a renewed strategy. The disappearance of the thematic partnerships in which civil society was included should not be done at the expense of the participation of civil society.

5. Recommendations to the members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

The members of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly should ensure that:

- The strategy focuses on **political dialogue** and builds trust, grounded on shared values and identified common interests.
- **Complementarity** is achieved between the EU-Africa partnership as a dialogue and developing policies instrument on the one hand, and the various instruments for financial and technical instruments on the other hand, that exist under the Cotonou Agreement for instance in order to avoid any duplication of work.
- The **partnership framework** that the Africa-EU strategy offers in order to identify and promote common interests to both parties and to defend them in various international fora and conferences is proactively developed.
- The strategy is used as a mean to increase **coordination** and synergies between different cooperation programmes that exist at the EU level and its member States, while focusing the action plan on activities where the EU and the AU have real **added value**.
- The dialogue mechanisms and the joint institutions put in place by the Africa-EU partnership in order to promote the **coherence of development policies** are used.
- The **MDGs, human rights, gender equality and regional integration** as common objectives to the various components of the new proposed work structure are mainstreamed.
- Parliaments and civil society are called upon for more **information** in order to address the current decision-making processes lack of transparency.
- **Parliamentarians and civil society are fully integrated** not only in the preparation of the EU-Africa Summit 2014, but also in the framework of the new strategy resulting from the Summit.
- Support the adequate human and financial resources as well as the implementation of flexible mechanisms which would allow an **extensive, representative and meaningful participation by the African and European civil societies** is supported.