

CONCORD's alternatives to five EU narratives on the EU-Africa Partnership

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Ahead of the Africa-EU Summit CONCORD recommends that the future Africa-EU Partnership build a long-term strategy putting people and planet first and coherent with both continents' commitments on sustainable development, prosperity and peace for their people. CONCORD further expresses concern that development policy and public funding, notably official development assistance, are increasingly being diverted or leveraged to serve EU interests, rather than meeting the needs and aspirations of people in Africa.

Below CONCORD tackles **5 EU narratives** that underpin the EU's approach to the EU-Africa Summit and suggests positive alternatives:

1. **MIGRATION:** *using all leverage possible to keep people there and send people back*

✗ The EU's migration and development approach fails to acknowledge that the overall majority of Africans who migrate do so within their own continent. Borders have tightened in the North while no alternative legal pathways have been provided, increasingly putting people at risk. Whilst much of EU attention and resources is focused on North Africa and specific countries from where migrants to Europe are deemed to originate, there is decreasing development assistance for Southern Africa, a region to which increased numbers of people are moving, seeking a better future.

✗ The EU's approach to migration and development policies is currently built on two main priorities: sending people back and keeping people there. For many years, African countries have been confronted with aid and trade conditionalities that offer "more-for-more", pressuring them into accepting readmission and return of their nationals. The EU and Member States meanwhile intend to move to "less-for-less" approaches that reduce aid, withhold trade preferences or use every form of leverage possible to achieve policy objectives other than those associated with development cooperation. From withholding visas for students, business leaders, diplomats and other expats to providing extra funds to partner countries as incentives to prevent migration, these measures may be detrimental to achieving the EU's stated development objectives.

✗ EU policy narrative also suggests that part of its efforts are designed to "address the root causes of migration". First, this narrative lacks an understanding that migration is not a problem per se, as long as those who decide to migrate have other options, and that safe and legal pathways are in fact a key part of migration management to be able to better regulate and control influxes of migrants. It also does not take into account the fact that much of the migration is regular migration. Thirdly, the EU narrative suggests that irregular migration towards the EU will stop as a result of investing in long-term employment and economic development in Africa. Research has shown that the opposite is happening in low income countries: at first outward migration will increase. It cannot be argued the EU is not being informed about this so-called "migration hump", this has been evidenced time and again by academics and civil society organisations. It seems

that the EU is using this flawed narrative to promote EU investments and engagement of EU companies, of which the European External Investment Plan (EIP) is a prime example.

✘ Instead of addressing the root causes of forced migration and displacement, the EU and its Member States are increasingly spending large amounts of scarce ODA resources on migration management, and even larger sums on the reception of asylum seekers in their own countries. At the same time, the resources for countries like Uganda which are hosting millions of refugees are not forthcoming. Development programming and ODA should be used in line with the development effectiveness principles of ownership by, and alignment to the recipient country's priorities. Fundamentally it has to be about poverty eradication and creating sustainable development. Spending ODA on border management is in contradiction with the Lisbon Treaty, which states that poverty eradication is the main purpose of EU development policy.

✘ The EU is pushing for more border controls among African states but this harms human mobility as a household strategy to improve living conditions and regional agreements such as ECOWAS. The EU should dialogue with African states to identify a pro-development migration management, reconciling border security needs with positive human mobility in order to support livelihood strategies.

- ✓ *The EU narrative should look at migration as a positive force for development, and migrants and refugees as development actors with a potential positive role to play in development. Global development across the ages has never been possible without migrants and their contribution. This has also been recognised by the signatories of the 2030 Agenda, including all EU and AU member states. As agreed in the 2030 Agenda, their contribution needs to be facilitated rather than blocked, including by the EU.*
- ✓ *The EU should focus its efforts on tackling forced migration and displacement – the really problematic area of migration. This means addressing all possible factors and drivers that force people to leave their homes and communities and engage in unsafe migration, such as conflict, climate change, inequality, poverty and governance failures. In fact, many of the 244 million international migrants are in some ways forced to leave, even if they are not fleeing war or persecution. Improving local political, environmental and socio-economic conditions should be the number one priority for the EU-Africa Partnership, while increasing legal pathways for human mobility and its benefits for local development. This should include establishing a regulatory framework to ensure safe, regular pathways for asylum seekers and migrants.*
- ✓ *The return of rejected asylum seekers should be conducted in safety, and with respect for their human rights and dignity, with support for their successful reintegration into their societies of origin. The absence of a real Common European Asylum System (CEAS) continues to be highly problematic and leaves many people in the dark and unable to have their rightful claims respected during the process.*

2. SECURITY: Putting borders before human security and human rights

✘ A narrative which equates border control with security and safety, and frequently links migration with terrorism has repercussions for the rights of both migrants and refugees. Returning migrants back to countries where they are not safe, with little or no oversight over their protection, is not compliant with Europe's international human rights obligations. Any

policy of returning migrants to 'safe areas' not of their origin also risks undermining sustainable development policies the EU is pursuing in countries of origin in the long term.

✘ Spending ODA on migration management and supporting security forces in the region diverts funding away from people-centred sustainable development, as funds no longer go to addressing the drivers of fragility but rather the symptoms. This risks leading to unjustified disparities in funding between regions, and weakens the link between development spending and actual need - thus strengthening the politicisation of ODA and development cooperation more broadly.

- ✓ *EU cooperation with African countries on security should have a greater focus on tackling climate change as a driver of insecurity and conflict now and in the future. Failure to prioritise investments in adaptation, enhancing adaptive capacity of countries and strengthening resilience to climate change risks missing the global goal set by the Paris Agreement and undermining long-term strategies to secure the socio-economic and ecological systems on which poor people depend.*
- ✓ *If EU and Africa want to build societal and state resilience with a people-centred focus, the primary objective should be to strengthen inclusive governance. Governance strategies that support citizens to actively engage with powerholders ultimately lead to investments, services and supportive policies that correspond with their needs and contribute to building their resilience.*
- ✓ *When turning to security sector actors, the EU and Member States should disclose their plans and seek the scrutiny of the international community, OEDC DAC included. The EU should refrain from spending development aid on military actors, and all financing must comply with the requirements of OECD-DAC ODA definition if sourced from development financing instruments.*
- ✓ *EU-Africa cooperation in the area of security must integrate a clear women's rights perspective, including by fully implementing the "UN Security Council Resolution 1325" and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, which aim to strengthen women's participation as actors for peace and security, as well as to eliminate the widespread use of gender-based and sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.*
- ✓ *The EU and Africa need to develop a peace and security framework which looks beyond the crisis management of symptoms such as conflicts, forced displacement or famines. Addressing fragility, strengthening resilience, reducing insecurity and preventing conflicts requires a people-centred approach, oriented towards addressing the root causes of poverty, creating social justice, stabilising and building democratic and well-functioning states and institutions, containing violence in general and gender-based violence in particular, and building a culture of peaceful conflict transformation within and between societies. It is of the utmost importance to support civil society initiatives in this regard.*

3. PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT: At any cost?

✘ The focus on using private sector instruments such as the European Fund for Sustainable Development and External Investment Plan to tackle the "root causes of migration" in fragile contexts in Africa lacks analytical underpinning. There is little evidence that leveraging European companies' investments in poor Sub-Saharan African states will deliver decent jobs and services

for the poorest people in a sustainable way, nor that the private sector will invest in fragile contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa. On the contrary, using ODA to provide private sector guarantees risks diverting ODA away from supporting domestic small-scale private sector development and local inclusive business models, or from investing in public goods such as education, health and the preservation and restoration of natural resources.

- ✓ *The EU's private sector-oriented aid initiatives should recognise that the most important category of private sector actors in terms of creating employment, strengthening local economies and promoting social cohesion in low income countries are the small-scale family farmers (responsible for 90% of all investment in agriculture) and SMEs targeting domestic markets. ODA should support their efforts. This will require re-designing instruments such as the External Investment Plan.*
- ✓ *Instruments proposed by the EU should be accountable for delivery in line with pro-poor, pro-women, and environmentally friendly objectives, and with a raised bar on transparency, ensuring strong ex-ante social and environmental standards are in place. There should be ownership and policy dialogue with partner governments and communities impacted by investments involving European companies operating in partner countries, including a grievance mechanism and corporate accountability mechanism to ensure human rights are respected and the environment is safeguarded.*
- ✓ *The EU should spell out how it intends to support improvement in local African business environments, with specific plans for empowering women and youth. It should ensure that private finance does not substitute public investment in health, agriculture, education, infrastructure, adaptation to climate change and social protection and that sustainable development and poverty eradication remain the primary objectives of its partnership with Africa. Addressing power imbalances (in supply chains, in multi-stakeholder dialogues, etc.) should be at the core of the EU approach to tackling inequalities.*
- ✓ *In the case of blending and leveraging, the EU should work with its African partners to guarantee the financial and developmental additionality of the funds and the development nature of the results. Aligning proposed support with national development agendas and ensuring the participation of civil society in defining the needs is critical to any hope of lasting success.*

4. TAX AND TRADE: *will bring benefits for Africa and the EU*

✗ The EU's assumption that international trade will boost inclusive economic growth in Africa is not borne out by the evidence. Overemphasis on trade agreements, foreign direct investments and global value chains without effective safeguards discounts the evidence that this approach has negative effects for entire segments of the population, including the most vulnerable. It also ignores calls by CSOs and social movements for a different trade agenda, prioritising people and the planet over protecting investors. Furthermore, it downplays the importance of local, national and regional trade.

✗ National budgets in many African countries rely on corporate taxes to a larger extent than budgets in OECD countries. Corporate tax avoidance, combined with international tax standards which favour richer countries in the division of taxing rights, and the irresponsible use of tax incentives, affect developing countries particularly strongly, costing them more than 100bn USD

in estimated lost revenue every year.¹ Loss of tax revenue and capital flight from Africa to Europe also undermines countries' ownership over their own development process. All these processes are to the detriment of a meaningful partnership with Africa.

- ✓ *The EU and Member States' taxation policies must not undermine and – where possible – should support developing countries in their fight against corporate tax avoidance. EU policies should translate into greater domestic resource mobilisation in Africa.*
- ✓ *In view of the commitment to gender equality in development, the EU should support corporate tax transparency and contributions as crucial source of funding for gender-responsive public services in Africa.*
- ✓ *The EU should ensure greater transparency in tax payments by multinational companies in various countries and obligations in the extractives and banking sectors should be expanded to all sectors through the introduction of effective and comprehensive public Country-by-Country Reporting requirement, without exceptions.*

5. YOUTH: Tokenism over long-term investment in poverty reduction

✗ The EU's focus on investing in youth is an opportunity, but it is unclear that the EU will make a meaningful offer for Africa's young people at the coming Summit. It is also unclear that the EU's migration partnership approach and reliance on private sector guarantees will achieve the stated aims if there is less long-term investment in poverty reduction among younger populations and their empowerment, starting in childhood. There is no clear evidence that the private sector alone will deliver decent jobs and futures, without continuing robust public investment and ODA support to essential services, and without deeply reforming corporate governance itself.

- ✓ *This means, to achieve scalable results, not only focusing on Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) for adolescents and young adults, but investing in systems to ensure all children have access to health care, adequate nutrition and quality basic education in their formative childhood years. Delivering more and better jobs will require supporting partner countries to invest in earlier health and education interventions (tackling stunting, fostering basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills) to ensure adolescents and young adults are equipped to make the most of TVET opportunities when they arise. It will also require investments in freedom of association, and the facilitation of social dialogue at all levels.*
- ✓ *The EU needs to prioritise the sustainable development goals, and the roadmap they offer, in the Africa Partnership - focusing on leaving no one behind, especially children who are marginalised and excluded, recognising that different children and youth face different barriers and have different needs.*
- ✓ *Improving school retention and completion rates for both boys and girls is crucial so they have the skills to be part of a productive workforce and can contribute as citizens to the development of their families and communities. The EU should use its focus on gender to empower girls who face additional barriers to education and employment, given girls'*

¹ UNCTAD (2015), "International Tax and Investment Policy Coherence", in *World Investment Report 2015: Reforming International Investment Governance*, http://unctad.org/en/PublicationChapters/wir2015ch5_en.pdf

potential to transform their generation and the one to come. Youth on the move or in protracted refugee situations within Africa are another group the EU should prioritise in supporting access to quality education, which is one of the most equalising forces in society.

- ✓ *Investing in youth, means investing in them wherever they are: The EU should commit to allocating additional ODA to Africa – home to most of the LDCs. Without this commitment, there is a risk to create a gap in the funding for the people and countries most in need.*
- ✓ *Meeting the hopes of future generations of Africans and Europeans means listening to diverse groups of young people up to, at and beyond the Summit. The EU should avoid tokenism and should design processes to allow the meaningful political and economic inclusion of young people in processes. Clearly a strong and integrated Africa can be fully realised only if its demographic advantage of young people is mobilised and equipped to help drive Africa's integration, peace and development agenda. This requires EU support for African leadership that is accountable and provides for the meaningful participation of young people at local, national and regional levels.*

CONCLUSION: Invest in policy coherence for long-term sustainable development

Instead of pursuing short-term interests the EU should be pursuing a long-term relationship with the African Union and African people, grounded in human rights and sustainable development.

This approach should be at the core of European policies on trade, finance, environment and climate change, food security, migration and security.

The EU should partner with African countries in managing mobility so it is possible to migrate safely, so that there can be "brain gain" and so that the right to asylum is respected as well as the rights of migrant women, children and men along their journey.

The EU should ensure that security policies support and do not undermine human rights and development and invest in children and youth for the long-term through systems strengthening, and focusing on reaching those furthest behind, no matter who and where they are.

The EU should prioritise combatting illicit financial flows and tax avoidance which rob Africa of millions of dollars and forging new trade and investment policies which do not leave large numbers of people behind in Europe and in Africa, but rather foster sustainable development and the realisation of human and labour rights for all in a race to the top.

The EU should look at the external impacts of its policies in a much more consistent way, and establish effective and accessible remedy mechanisms for affected communities.

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European NGO confederation for relief and development

