

# Towards a new EU-Africa Strategy

## CONCORD 10 points for building a real partnership

On 9th March 2020 the joint communication 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa' was released by the European Commission and the European External Action Service. The Communication will be used as a basis for talks between the European Union and their African counterparts when defining the new EU comprehensive strategy with Africa, which will be approved at the EU-African Union summit in October 2020 in Brussels.

CONCORD Europe, representing 2600 NGOs in Europe and abroad, offers here an initial reaction to be followed up shortly in more detail. We welcome the fact that the European Union, by unveiling the Joint Communication is reviewing and updating its partnership and cooperation with African states and the African Union, but it is our view that such an important process, reflecting the ambitions of a 'geopolitical Commission', would have required the involvement of the African partners from the start and a much more inclusive process. In addition, a new EU strategy with Africa should take into consideration the ongoing negotiations on the EU-Africa protocol of the future EU-ACP agreement: these two processes should mutually influence and reinforce each other.

**According to CONCORD Europe, a new comprehensive EU-Africa strategy must be shaped around ten core elements - which are a prerequisite for a strategy that aims at building a real partnership:**

- 1) Civil society is a key actor** for positive change. Especially in light of the shrinking space that civil society faces both in Europe and Africa, the new EU-Africa partnership must recognise the multiple roles and contributions of civil society organisations and therefore the need to involve them at all levels of political and policy dialogue and when implementation plans are prepared, monitored and evaluated. A real partnership must reflect the voices of civil society of both continents, to promote an effective democratic governance.
- 2) The EU-Africa partnership must reaffirm the commitments to fully meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and implement the 2030 Agenda - respecting the key principle of Leaving No One Behind - the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biodiversity.** These should be the guiding frameworks for the relations between the European Union and Africa. All activities under the strategy must be compliant with climate objectives and goals, and there must be particular attention given to scaling-up adaptation and empowering the most vulnerable to deal with climate change.
- 3) Any new EU-Africa strategy must be firmly grounded in the respect and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, not simply pay lip service to them.** It must therefore address all forms of discrimination and must promote inclusive societies and civil society space for an improved democratic governance and civic participation. The partnership between the EU and Africa must ensure the protection and promotion in particular of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and the human rights of disadvantaged groups.
- 4) The number of young people in the African continent is on the rise: children and youth can be powerful actors of positive change for their societies and communities.** Policies and programmes can be transformational when children and young people are involved at the earliest stages of their drafting. Children and youth must be meaningfully involved in the definition and implementation of policies that affect their future. Their empowerment must be addressed as a cross-cutting issue in the future strategy. Children and youth should have equitable access to free and quality public education and quality healthcare, that are youth-friendly, as well as adequate nutrition, which play an equalising role in societies.

**5) Women and girls:** the strategy recognises women as key drivers of sustainable growth, development and peace. Therefore, the protection and promotion of women's and girls' rights and gender equality should have been mainstreamed throughout the strategy. Moreover, concrete measures should be included in the strategy, that would allow to fully unleash the potential of women and girls - such as a strong attention to gender-responsive budgeting. A strategy for a partnership between the EU and Africa should also include targeted actions in favour of gender equality, including a call to ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and implement women's rights frameworks at African level (i.e. the Maputo protocol on the Rights of Women).

**6) Tackling inequalities** should be a top priority for the EU in its international cooperation and partnership with Africa. We would stress the importance of supporting decent work, social dialogue, universal social protection, while promoting inclusive business models and an economy that works for people. Investments in these areas will also contribute to mitigating the effects of and adapting to the climate crisis

**7)** The EU-Africa strategy must put people before profits and ensure the economy serves people, not the other way around. **Private sector** engagement in the Africa-EU partnership must focus on supporting local micro, small and medium sized enterprises and social economy business models, and reach those with little access to financing, guaranteeing the inclusion of marginalised groups. A partnership between the EU and Africa should foresee rules and mechanisms to ensure that companies avoid negative human rights impacts and contribute to the common good of the local community.

**8) Policy coherence for the new strategy:** incoherencies and conflicting objectives between different domestic and foreign EU policies can have severe negative impacts on African countries' sustainable development plans and human rights. Therefore, the new strategy must include strong commitments to increase Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) and provide PCSD monitoring instruments. PCSD does not mean coherence with internal policies, on the contrary.

**9)** A new partnership between EU-Africa must ensure that **human development** is the foundation for sustainable development in the two continents. Investments in human capital provide for building the future of African nations and should therefore not be seen through the narrow lens of creating jobs. EU development aid in Africa should be focused on ensuring access to quality education at all levels, health, food security and nutrition, WASH, social protection, housing, addressing inequalities and promoting investments in public research and innovation (R&I). These are central to lifting people out of poverty. To complement targeted policies, we recommend strong emphasis on **educational opportunities for learning throughout life**, whether in non-formal or formal settings. Lifelong learning builds capacity of individuals and communities to contribute to the 2030 Agenda as a whole and is a prerequisite for active citizenship. We recommend stressing the implementation of the target 4.7 of the SDGs, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and education for sustainable development, in a system-wide approach.

**10)** The objective of the EU to strengthen the international rules-based order and the multilateral system must also be reflected in the way the new partnership will support **greater fairness and equality of representation in global governance bodies**. Moreover, all five thematic priorities should be based on international human rights law and on global guiding frameworks, and international commitments as a baseline to be respected by both parties. In particular, a partnership on Migration and mobility must take into account the two global compacts (Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration - GCM, Global Compact on Refugees - GCR).

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