

An EARN Proposal on the Joint Africa–EU Strategy and the Future of Africa–EU Relations¹

Agenda for Action

1. The Joint Africa–EU Strategy: What has been achieved and what next?

The 3rd Summit of African and EU Heads of State and Government organised in Tripoli (Libya, 29–30 November 2010) provides an opportunity to assess progress with the Joint Africa–EU Strategy (JAES) since the last Summit in 2007. The JAES remains an **innovative framework for a more comprehensive and deeper partnership** between Africa and the EU, but only if each of the parties is clear about the set of priorities that should guide their process of engagement in the partnership. It can then provide a unique perspective to overcome the traditional donor–recipient relationship and to reinforce political dialogue at a continental level on all thematic areas of common interest to Africa and Europe.

Three years is clearly too short a period to assess the results of this ambitious framework and to ensure full ownership by the various stakeholders in both Africa and Europe. It is recognised that dialogue and cooperation have improved in key areas such as Peace and Security and in some relatively new areas such as Climate Change, Energy and Science, Information Society and Space. This enhanced dialogue has been realised through more regular Commission-to-Commission meetings, Troika Ministerial and technical experts meetings, while the establishment of a strong EU Delegation to the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa has helped to intensify discussions between both Unions. The AU is increasingly taking up its continental mandate, which is also reflected in the progress on pan-African architectures on Peace and Security and on Governance.

However, much remains to be done. On the African side, the AU Commission mandate is too restricted to lead a supranational agenda, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) too little involved in shaping continental policy positions, non-state actors not enough consulted, and AU Member States decisions still very weakly, if at all, taken in light of common continental interests. On the EU side, Member States involvement remains weak; common interests sometimes unclear; and EU's negotiating attitude and agenda setting is often perceived by many African partners as led by a greedy and patronising attitude rather than a real commitment to a partnership of equals and to jointly working together on matters of common concern.

As independent analysis by members of the Europe–Africa Policy Research Network (EARN) and invited experts point out, **the partnership risks becoming estranged from its political content**. There is a tendency to adopt rather technocratic approaches to some of the contentious political issues between Africa and the EU. While it cannot be denied that more interaction through consultation and exchange has taken place, Europe and Africa have not addressed sufficiently or frankly divergences of views on major aspects of the partnership. In this context it is rather surprising that the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), a major contentious issue in the relationship between Europe and Africa in the last few years, has not been formally integrated into the JAES. Europe and Africa have also adopted different positions on climate change such as at the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, and major differences exist on other crucial issues such as migration, peace and security, governance and human rights and EU–Africa cooperation in other global fora.

¹ Elaborated jointly by IEEI, ECDPM and SAHIA, respectively chair and co-chairs of EARN and responsible for the EARN Working Group on Global Issues.

Failure to address sensitive issues and to confront the inevitable differences of perspective and diverse interests risks undermining the political relevance of the JAES. What is needed right now is a solid political economy analysis that would allow for a **closer understanding of the drivers and dynamics** of European and African partners' concrete interests and a **constructive, open debate at the highest political level** in both continents on credible compromises on all those issues that are of common concern.

It is against this background that EARN proposes an Agenda for Action for the future of EU–Africa relations, based on the collective analysis and discussions between African and European policy researchers during the last EARN meeting in Praia (Cape Verde), officially recognised as a side event to the 3rd Africa–EU Summit. It is hoped that the EARN recommendations will now be taken into consideration in the discussions during the upcoming Africa–EU Summit, and in the follow-up of the Summit and the 2nd Action Plan of the Joint Africa–EU strategy.

2. Crosscutting challenges to change the culture of the partnership

EARN strongly recommends the following steps to revitalise the JAES:

- **Expand the dialogue** by including the contentious issues between both parties on the agenda. This implies amongst others that EPAs, which have been the most controversial issue between both continents in the past decade, should be an integral part of the dialogue.
- **Improve the dialogue** by ensuring that it is a dialogue of political equals and that contentious issues are not discussed only at a lower technocratic level (e.g. migration), but at the highest political level too. This implies a higher level Ministerial political dialogue on specific thematic issues on the basis of well prepared agendas and with equitable outcomes that reflect the spirit of partnership between Africa and Europe.
- **Improve the analysis of the political economy**, the various interests at stake and the drivers who can move the process on both continents.
- **Move beyond development aid** as the focus of the relationship. This can be done by mainstreaming crosscutting issues like climate change adaptation, energy sustainability and migration that are traditionally excluded from the EU's development approach to Africa. It also requires extending the political dialogue to EU member-states and non-development cooperation departments in the European Commission (e.g. justice and home affairs, environment and energy) so as to ensure that the partnership overcomes the traditional donor-recipient dichotomy and becomes effectively more oriented towards working jointly through common concerns.
- **Reinforce the political dialogue** between the EU and Africa on issues of common interest **in multilateral fora** by focusing on a better understanding of what drives their respective positions. That would facilitate building common ground or identifying specific issues where consensus and a joint positioning is possible, and thus help move the debate forward.
- **Clarify** unambiguously the relationship and **complementarity** between the JAES, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, and the Union for the Mediterranean – this requires action from both European and African actors.
- **Increase the levels of participation and ownership** of other African and European stake-

holders (e.g. national governments and parliaments, RECs, economic and social actors, civil society, media, research community, etc) by providing more incentives and opportunities to engage in the JAES process. If the JAES Action Plan is more directly linked to the development plans and respective interests of African and European countries and regions, it can promote greater participation and sense of ‘ownership’ of the process. However, it is unlikely that the Action Plan can capture such interests without more actively incorporating and encouraging the participation of key actors outside the pan–African and European institutional actors and structures.

- **Address the asymmetry in the partnership** by strengthening legitimate and capable African institutions at pan–African and regional levels, and by focused capacity building initiatives. Cooperating as equal partners in a strategic relationship is only possible if persistent capacity gaps are recognised and addressed up–front.
- **Ensure joint responsibility for mobilising and for adapting the necessary financial means** to realise the JAES’ ambitious objectives, i.e.: African partners mobilising more of their own resources; the EU rationalising its various financial instruments, each with its different regulations, dealing with Africa (e.g. European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, European Development Fund). However, both parties should avoid the relationship becoming focused only on issues of financial instruments and volume of resources.
- The best **communication** strategy for the partnership will be it delivering concrete results that in themselves gather attention. Yet some investment in an active communication and information strategy on the JAES through the involvement of media and other stakeholders in both continents could be beneficial. Such a strategy will bear better results if the above–mentioned crosscutting challenges are adequately addressed.

3. Policy oriented recommendations in key thematic areas of the JAES

EARN also makes the following specific recommendations on some thematic issues in the JAES: (1) Peace and Security, (2) Global Governance, (3) Trade and Regional Integration, and (4) Climate Change.

3.1 Peace and Security

- **Engage in an open dialogue at national, regional and continental level**, as appropriate, on European and African security interests, priorities and expectations, and acknowledge differences where they exist. A clear understanding of those differences, including in approaches to security, may allow for an identification of shared security threats and approaches that combine African and European ways and means, and constitute a more solid basis to build an effective dialogue and partnership within and between Africa and Europe.
- **Confirm the value of each other’s contribution** to address their respective security priorities. That may also benefit dialogue and cooperation with other multilateral actors (e.g. UN, NATO, AFRICOM), including for the support of the African Peace and Security Architecture.
- **Improve coordination and harmonisation of national positions on both sides** to ensure more coherent and effective EU–Africa cooperation. On the EU side, the European External Action Service, once operational, and the EU delegation to the AU in Addis Ababa can play a constructive role in co–ordinating European common defence and security policy positions

and initiatives, and could provide a more robust platform to follow up on objectives already articulated in the peace and security partnership.

- **Jointly ensure predictable and sustainable funding for African peace operations**, including from African sources. Look to unblock the issue of sustainable funding through assessed UN contributions by having engagement at the highest political level.
- **Look beyond African peace and security issues**. If the peace and security partnership between the EU and Africa is meant to encompass global security concerns, its focus should not be limited to African security problems alone.

3.2 Global Governance

- Devote greater effort to **unpacking and openly discussing principles, values and fundamental action points for a more representative international governance system** that all key players within Africa, Europe and beyond can agree to.
- **Work towards internal coherence of positions in multilateral fora** as Europe and Africa (including agreement on collective representation).
- **Explore practical ways in which Africa and the EU can better coordinate and converge positions**. Namely, the upcoming G20 meeting in Seoul in November and the Cancun Summit on climate change in December are opportunities for Africa and the EU to both consolidate their internal positions as a group, and identify areas of consensus. For that purpose and as a confidence building measure, the EU should liaise with South Africa and the Committee of Ten on their positions on African issues before the Seoul G20 Summit.
- The EU could push for **reform of the International Finance Institutions** (IMF and World Bank) and use its stronger leverage and presence in the G-20 (where the EU and Member States have a quarter of the seats) to support Africa's proposals.

3.3 Trade and Regional Integration

- Use the JAES to **expose and address incoherencies in European and African approaches to regional integration, trade and development**. The Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure (TRII) should be given the chance to help clarify the links and complementarity between bilateral trade agreements, existing processes at sub-regional level – including the EPAs and the Union for the Mediterranean – and the activities carried out at the continental level within the JAES framework. The JAES could facilitate meetings across regions to exchange views on progress in EPA negotiations and in other regional processes, on best practice in assessment needs and on identification of regional complementarities.
- The 2nd Action Plan of the JAES should include a clear commitment to **better integrate the EPA agenda** with the development plans and the regional integration processes in Africa, recognising and respecting the diversity of situations and interests across African countries. A first step would be to conduct an objective assessment about what kind of EPA can most effectively support regional integration and development objectives of specific countries and regions, and which EPA provisions risk undermining them. That also implies African countries are clear about their development strategy and level of ambition for their regional integration agenda.

- **Re-programme and align the different EU resources with the objectives of the JAES.** The mid-term reviews of the European Development Fund (EDF) and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument provide an opportunity to do so, if jointly agreed by the EU EDF Committee and the ACP Committee of Ambassadors.

3.4 Climate Change

- **Mainstream climate change adaptation** into policy thinking and planning through all pillars of the JAES in the 2nd Action Plan, and particularly into development policies. That could be best done through climate change adaptation projects at grassroots level, which are really about development cooperation, and thus bring the impact of the JAES closer to the people.
- **Co-ordinate positions** on broader areas such as global responsibility for climate change, differentiated responsibility according to a country's capacity, the 2° C threshold, increased adaptation financing, etc. That would lay the basis for a possible joint position at the December 2010 Climate Change Summit in Cancun and/or the 2011 Conference of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in South Africa.
- **Mobilise new additional resources for adaptation financing**, primarily for those countries most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, and improve transparency over the amount, the delivery mechanism, and the sector focus of such funding in line with the Copenhagen agreement. Channelling such funding through an existing UN mechanism (e.g. the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund or the Least Developed Countries Fund of the Kyoto Protocol) could help address and respond to some of these concerns.
- **Support the development of institutional, negotiating and technical capacities in Africa on climate change** (e.g. surveillance and monitoring, accurate climate data and information, etc) and encourage existing initiatives (e.g. AMCEN, CAHOSCC) that focus on strengthening the resilience of African societies, particularly those dependent on natural resources for their livelihood.
- **Promote more collaboration between developing countries** and sharing of experiences on climate change mitigation and adaptation through existing policy frameworks (e.g. JAES, Cotonou agreement) among Least Developed Countries, small islands states and other vulnerable developing countries, including how to integrate this critical dimension for resilience into development plans.