

The EU-Africa Dialogue

Anders Henriksson

Sumário

Existem actualmente oportunidades renovadas de evolução positiva a vários níveis em África, nomeadamente no processo de integração regional, que permitiu a criação de um nível de governação pan-africano, com novas abordagens e instituições. A integração do Secretariado da NEPAD na Comissão da União Africana tornará possível a existência de um quadro estratégico comum para dar resposta aos problemas políticos e de desenvolvimento.

O apoio que a Comissão Europeia poderá dar a este processo encontra-se actualmente em discussão, no âmbito de um diálogo euro-africano que tem evoluído de forma significativa, como demonstra o compromisso assumido na Cimeira de Maputo, em Julho de 2003. As questões da governação, da responsabilização (accountability) mútua e do envolvimento da sociedade civil, constituem novos desafios para um diálogo que será, no futuro, mais centrado em questões políticas essenciais. Segundo o autor, a União Europeia deve apoiar – moral, política e financeiramente – a criação e reforço das capacidades das instituições africanas, nomeadamente na área da paz e segurança.

Let me first of all apologize on behalf of Commissioner Nielson, who could not be present today due to a very heavy agenda. He has asked me to represent him here and to let you know that he would have liked to participate personally at this conference, committed as he is to the pan-African integration process and to a strengthened relationship between this new Africa and Europe.

The political commitment of the European Commission to this process has most recently been demonstrated by the presence of President Romano Prodi and Commissioner Poul Nielson at the AU Summit in Maputo last July.

We have today opportunities for progress in Africa which have not been present in the past. Given this perspective, I would this morning like to make a few remarks on three points:

- How we at the European Commission see the emerging African integration process;
- Some ideas of the European Commission regarding how the EU-Africa dialogue can be further developed; and
- The involvement of non-state actors in the EU-Africa dialogue and the role of this conference.

Over the last three years, we have witnessed a remarkable development in Africa by Africans to speed up the continental integration process by creating a pan-African level of governance with a new vision and new institutions.

The Emerging African
Integration Process

The EU, and the European Commission in particular, has been closely following these promising developments.

The African Union makes a clear break with the OAU in addressing Africa's development challenges. These challenges have also evolved, *politically* since the fall at the Berlin wall and *economically* with the intensification of the globalisation process, which has led to an increased marginalisation of Africa.

With the establishment of new institutions, such as the AU Commission, the pan-African Parliament and the African Court of Justice, the African Union is about to create a new level of political governance on the continent. The Constitutive Act of the Union clearly reflects this ambition for an Africa-wide integration and it provides, *inter alia*, a legal basis for the intervention in Member States affairs in case of grave circumstances. This represents a very significant evolution in Africa.

With NEPAD African leaders have provided their emerging institutions with a concrete programme of action. Last week I had the pleasure of hosting the NEPAD Secretariat during its visit to the European Commission in Brussels. The visit allowed me to witness the progress made by the Secretariat since the presentation of its first comprehensive programme two years ago by translating this programme into concrete action plans.

With the progressive integration of the NEPAD Secretariat into the AU Commission in the next three years, Africa should definitely be equipped with one single strategic institutional framework at the continental level.

The specificity of EU-Africa and, indeed, of EU-AU relations does not need much explanation. The two continents are linked through their history, economy and shared political interests to eradicate poverty and create security, stability, democracy and better governance across the African continent.

Developing
the EU-Africa Dialogue

We at the European Commission have recently presented our views on how the EU-Africa dialogue could be strengthened and developed. We did so in a Communication to the EU Council issued last July, which I believe has been distributed to all of you. I am happy to say that the Council has reacted quite positively to our proposals and I strongly recommend the text to you.

While the Zimbabwe issue has provoked some turbulence in the dialogue, including the postponement of the Lisbon Summit, European and African ministers decided in Maputo last July to look forward and to work out concrete proposals for how to improve both the content and the modalities of the dialogue.

The new modalities, which should make the dialogue more focused on key political issues, more flexible and thus more effective, will be discussed at the upcoming EU-Africa Ministerial Troika meeting in Rome on 10 November. I expect that in this meeting the ideas that we have put forward in our Communication will play a prominent role.

Regarding the substance, the dialogue on governance and mutual accountability is certainly a new challenge, which requires mutual confidence and trust. We have to work hard on this, as the creation and maintenance of mutual confidence is key to the effectiveness of the dialogue.

One area where the dialogue looks quite promising is on the key issue of peace and security – one of the themes of this conference. The combination of a new legal basis in the AU Constitutive Act, more efficient institutions and strong political leadership make the AU profoundly different than the OAU in this respect. This emerging new peace and security architecture in Africa has elicited a political response from the EU side.

Europe should and will be a major partner when Africa is now facing this key challenge.

We should offer our support, both morally, politically and financially.

As such, the Commission is currently engaged in financing different African peace-keeping forces, such as in Liberia and Burundi. Beyond this ad-hoc financing, the Commission is currently preparing a more permanent Peace Facility as was requested by the AU Summit in Maputo. The basic principles of this facility should be ownership, solidarity and development.

Involvement of The participation of non-state actors, such as civil society, academics and economic non-State Actors in and social actors, in the EU-Africa dialogue has until now been rather limited. No formal the EU-Africa Dialogue dialogue including such actors has taken place since the civil society conference held in and the Role of this conjunction with the Cairo Summit in 2000. At European Commission, we consider this Conference to be a pity. We believe that non-state actors have a real input to offer to enrich the dialogue. In fact, the involvement of such actors is considered to be one of the major innovative elements of the Cotonou agreement.

Also the AU attaches a fundamental importance to the involvement of civil society. It has taken steps to involve civil society in discussions on human rights, democracy and governance and to provide for the representation of such actors in the pan-African Parliament and the ECOSOC. It is in this context that we at the European Commission are keen to hear your views on this issue and we see this conference as an important contribution to strengthening the involvement of non-state actors in the EU-Africa dialogue.

New Challenges in Europe-Africa Cooperation *A posição de África nos mercados internacionais está actualmente mais fragilizada do que há três ou quatro décadas, seja em termos de comércio e de investimento, seja no âmbito da Ajuda Pública ao Desenvolvimento. Com efeito, o continente africano é o único que não apresenta progressos nos indicadores de pobreza, pelo que uma nova parceria com a Europa – o único «vizinho» em termos geográficos – se torna particularmente urgente. Esta parceria não pode estar relacionada apenas com fluxos de recursos, mas deverá equacionar as causas profundas dos problemas e englobar uma estratégia de longo prazo que dedique especial atenção a questões cruciais como a dívida externa ou o acesso a mercados. A NEPAD e a União Africana são já sinais de mudança importantes (particularmente com o mecanismo de «revisão pelos pares»), em relação aos quais a Europa terá, mais do que quaisquer outros actores internacionais, um papel fundamental a desempenhar.*

All my life I spoke on behalf of the United Nations or governments. Now, for the last decade I've been on the other side, speaking for the civil society, which means there is more freedom to talk and get to the root of the problem. I agree with the previous speaker of the EU, that indeed the European commission intends to have dialogue,

more seriously and more frequently, with the civil society. The views from the trenches are very important and you never get to the heart of the matter until you have the opportunity and privilege of speaking to people who are working in the field. In the past, it's true our civil society wasn't well organised. But that is no longer the case and we should take advantage of the opportunity and encourage candid discussion and an open dialogue by involving civil society in the debates. When I left the UN, I joined the African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies. In 1993, with the emergence of the New World order, we held a conference in Dakar "Beyond Dispossession and Dependence" under the chairmanship of Julius Nyerere who was the president of the body of Governors of that centre.

It is said by Elliot that the past and the future are both contained in the present. You really cannot talk about tomorrow if you don't take into full acquaintance today and if you forget what happened yesterday. Of course you should not be bound by what happened yesterday, but you should know and always remember what happened yesterday. This book dealt in extent with what happened with Africa in the past, Africa in the present and what lessons might be drawn in the world in which we are, for the future.

Africa has no neighbour other than Europe. Africa is to Europe what Latin America is to the US. Therefore, more than any other region in the world, Europe has a strong responsibility towards the African continent. And when you have a neighbour that is getting poorer, where conflicts are more prevalent than peace, where people are marginalized and the continent is getting weaker in terms of its contribution to world development, the richer neighbour ought to ask, "what are we doing wrong?" I believe that this forum should be the beginning on a discussion about "how can we really make a difference in Africa?"; "what do we need to do?" We need to be innovative, rather than pursuing the old lies. I took part in the establishment of the EU-ACP cooperation

– Lomé I, Lomé II, Lomé III – and the only one I missed was Cotonou. In all those years the African continent has receded in several areas. Africa is less important today than it was at the time of Lomé I, in terms of trade with Europe, in terms of investment and Official Development Assistance (ODA). "Why", is the question we must ask ourselves. Africa is a poor competitor vis-à-vis Latin America and Asia. While in Latin America and East Asia most poverty indicators show an improvement, for Africa and South-Asia poverty is growing. However, we must not forget that in South Asia there is India, which is going through a process of fast change and in five years from now we'll find out that Africa is the only continent where poverty is going up. Already the UN millennium plan objectives for 2015 are now being changed for 2025. The situation hasn't really improved. Whatever we talk about new democracy, the concept of new development has not yet been internalised in Africa and I believe the need for new partnership between Africa and Europe is now more urgent than ever. All the brains in Europe and Africa should get together to design such partnership, to go beyond the usual and see what really needs to be done. It's not so much in terms of flow of resources; it goes far beyond that. It needs address to the root of the problems and design a long-term strategy that will allow Europe to save itself from an increasingly impoverished neighbour, as well as helping Africa emerging from poverty and become a real partner in this relationship.

In this sense there are some specific issues that need to be immediately addressed. Africa cannot make any effective progress in the development field as long as it has

to carry a heavy debt burden. For most countries, the debt service is larger than the total annual export earnings. All the solutions that have come from the G7 or the G8 have really been playing the other side. The debt situation is worse today than it was 5 years ago and worse than in 1986, when I first called the African Summit on Debt. The majority of the creditor countries are in Europe; therefore, this is an area where Europe can play a major role. Unless something positive happens, and happens urgently, the cumulative process of debt is unbearable. In Africa we have paid more than what we borrowed because we have not been able to service that debt regularly. This is an area where we need serious dialogue with European countries and institutions. There are presidents in countries that have been unable to pay their debt and yet are being helped out of their debt trap. Why can't Europe apply that to Africa?

The second issue that needs urgent attention is access to markets. A man called Col-lin Clark wrote a book in the late 50s, in which was said that the future of the World depends on agricultural countries because the terms of trade were in favour of the trade in commodities. That has been proved wrong. Not because agriculture is not important, but because Europe has become an agricultural continent. This is positive for food security in Europe but has a tremendous impact particularly in its neighbour, Africa. This explains the failure of Cancun. Again, Europe has a direct responsibility in promoting dialogue to really give Africa access to its market. This was realised in the early days of EU-ACP cooperation, when *Stabex* was formulated to stabilise incomes. Currently, all that has gone with the wind and therefore there is no protection for Africa and no safety for the farmers, which means low savings, not and ultimately no invest-ment. Even if there are foreign investments, how can an economic sector grow without domestic savings and investment?

Currently, people talk about new partnerships. NEPAD and the African Union mean that we believe that old partnerships are not working. Regarding the revolution that is taking place in Africa with the "peer review mechanism" I'd like to point out two things:

- For the first time the African Heads of State have themselves involved in working out a new development partnership – the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). Personally, I also have been involved in establishing the Lagos Plan of Action and all that followed it. I welcome the fact that the heads of state have taken the role to design one for themselves, but it continues to worry me that it was mostly the G8 that came out openly in its support – not the EU, that is concerned mostly with Lomé/Cotonou. Does it mean that NEPAD has no meaning in the Cotonou framework? If it is going to be a new partnership, we have to look at Cotonou agreement again to really bring it to the level, or the type, of new partnership that NEPAD is talking about.
- The second revolution in course is the so-called "peer review mechanism". I am one of the seven that have been appointed to carry out the peer review. Our heads of state have declared that they are willing to subject themselves to this evaluation. I never thought it would go beyond the paper, until they announced the names of the panel that are responsible of carrying out this process. Without assistance from abroad there will be nothing to review. Let Europe help in every way to make sure that the peer review, which has been welcomed by the whole world, is given

full meaning by assuring that the African countries themselves pursue democratic processes. Democracy has no high prospect in a poor society. The PPP– public-private partnership – is very important. However, the private sector in Africa has still a very low participation in the partnership. I defend that the external private sector should focus on the productive sector. The UNCTAD made a study three or four years ago to see where the priorities lie in terms of investment in Africa. They find out that, apart from mineral prospecting activities, there is very little interest elsewhere. Therefore, we have an inconsistency between the priorities of the private sector – represented by transnational corporations – and the priorities defined in the text of NEPAD. How do we coordinate these different axes? This is also an area of great challenge in Europe-Africa relations.

There are many areas that need to be looked into. I have only mentioned a few, because if we can break the deadlock in those issues, the other areas of oppression will be relatively easy to address, ultimately giving a stronger meaning to Europe-Africa Cooperation.