



Committee of the Regions

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**OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions
on
ONE YEAR AFTER LISBON: THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP AT
WORK
and
THE EU, AFRICA AND CHINA: TOWARDS TRILATERAL
DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- salutes the efforts made by European and African stakeholders since the launch of the EU-Africa partnership and stresses the need to continue, accelerate, strengthen and expand the initiatives already under way within the context of the eight partnerships;
- proposes that the Committee of the Regions be involved in the work of the groups responsible for implementing the thematic partnerships, in particular for governance, the MDG, climate change, migration, mobility and employment; stresses the need to equip the EU with statistical and evaluation instruments relating to the decentralised cooperation activities undertaken by LRAs; recalls that the conference on decentralised cooperation must be the key forum for dialogue between the CoR and the Commission and that, in this context, particular prominence should be given to the EU-Africa partnership;
- welcomes the Commission communication on cooperation between the EU, Africa and China and points out the differences in goals and methods that currently exist between the EU's development aid policy and that of China on the African continent; these differences make enhanced cooperation all the more necessary, whilst maintaining strict criteria of good governance and respect for human rights;
- considers that work should start immediately on establishing arrangements for involving African, European and Chinese local and regional authorities in the EU/Africa/China dialogue, in particular as regards determining the themes for cooperation;
- stresses, in the context of the current economic and financial crisis, the need to maintain and increase the funds set aside for development aid to Africa.

Rapporteur: Mr Jean-Louis Destans
President of the General Council of the Eure

Reference documents

One year after Lisbon: The Africa-EU partnership at work
COM(2008) 617 final
The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation
COM(2008) 654 final

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

A. GENERAL COMMENTS

On the EU-Africa partnership

1. welcomes the publication of the European Commission communication entitled *One year after Lisbon: The Africa-EU partnership at work*, which is an assessment of the first year of implementation of the 2008-2010 action plan and its eight thematic partnerships aimed at putting the joint EU-Africa strategy into practice;
2. salutes the efforts made by European and African stakeholders since the launch of the common strategy in December 2007, which have made it possible to lay the foundations for cooperation "beyond development", "beyond Africa" and "beyond institutions";
3. stresses that these first positive steps must not conceal the need to continue, accelerate, strengthen and expand the initiatives already under way within the context of the eight partnerships. The development and cooperation strategy between the Union and Africa cannot provide the expected results without a constant and increased commitment by both sides. The results of the first year of implementation must be an encouragement to European and African stakeholders to intensify their efforts and contribute to the long-term success of the strategy;
4. welcomes the adoption of a joint report by the EU and the African Union on 21 November last year, which endorses the European Commission's conclusions;
5. notes with interest the Commission's work in not only taking stock of the past, but also making recommendations for the future with a view to:
 - overcoming the difficulties encountered in implementing the action plan;
 - promoting collective ownership by all stakeholders;
 - developing a holistic, cross-cutting approach to the African continent;
 - encouraging EU/Africa coordination and cooperation in international bodies;
 - enhancing communication on the aims and achievements of the partnership so as to ensure greater transparency and strong public support in Africa and Europe;
6. points out that, across all of these recommendations and all three pillars of the partnership, in particular those entitled "beyond development" and "beyond institutions", the added value that the Committee of the Regions and European and African local authorities can bring is clear and is recognised, and that the Commission should have emphasised this in its communication;

On trilateral dialogue and cooperation between the EU, Africa and China

7. welcomes the Commission communication *The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation* and stresses the importance of the dynamic that has been set in motion, which constitutes a first step towards the creation of synergies for Africa;
8. considers that it is essential for Africa's future that cooperation be started between the EU and China. Both of these have developed bilateral partnerships with Africa and are its first and third biggest trading partners respectively and the two biggest direct investors in that continent;
9. considers that this trilateral approach needs placing in a worldwide context, including the large emerging countries;
10. points out the differences in goals and methods that currently exist between the EU's development aid policy and that of China on the African continent; these differences make enhanced cooperation all the more necessary;
11. calls on the African Union, African countries and the local and regional authorities of Africa to fully assume their role in establishing the themes of cooperation and the launch of this dialogue. This must not simply be a matter of coordinating European and Chinese policies;
12. encourages Africa's continental, national, regional and local leaders to make proposals for cooperation in the areas that they believe to be most likely to meet Africa's development challenges;
13. recalls that, in this area, a flexible and pragmatic approach should be adopted in order to list all the possible areas for cooperation, without excluding certain areas from the outset;
14. highlights the importance of the cooperation theme entitled *Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*, considering the policies of intensive exploitation of energy resources that are being carried out in Africa;
15. is amazed that the European Commission did not put more emphasis on health, education and research in the themes for cooperation it proposes. These are key areas for Africa's long-term development and are priorities for action laid down by the United Nations and the EU-Africa partnership. The Committee therefore calls on the Commission to beef up its proposals in this area;
16. recommends that the African Union be treated as a key partner in this trilateral relationship so as to promote a coherent, holistic approach that transcends national divides;

17. welcomes the holding of an EU-China summit in Prague in May 2009, and calls on the Council to:
 - mention EU-Africa-China trilateral cooperation so as to flesh out the Commission's proposals;
 - strengthen the prospects for cooperation in the areas for health, education and research;
 - take account of proposals made by African stakeholders;
18. stresses that the EU must maintain its strict criteria of good governance and respect for human rights in the conduct of its development aid policy for Africa, whether this is conducted by means of bilateral EU-Africa cooperation or trilateral EU-Africa-China cooperation;
19. considers that this conditionality must be applied dynamically and progressively in such a way as to take account of progress made and policies put in place by African countries to promote good governance and respect for human rights;
20. emphasises that trilateral EU/Africa/China cooperation must not consist of alignment with China's goals and methods, as such an approach would not necessarily be compatible with the EU's values and principles or with Africa's long-term interests, though this does not rule out looking for areas of shared interest;
21. affirms the long-term role of the Committee of the Regions and of European, African and Chinese local and regional authorities in putting the EU-Africa-China trialogue into practice. This must become more tangible, whereas the trend is for bilateral EU-Africa, Africa-China and EU-China relations to develop;
22. considers that the arrangements for implementing trilateral cooperation and dialogue must take account of and be appropriate to the economic and social circumstances of each region or territory, and that the LRAs of the EU, Africa and China should be involved in defining these arrangements;
23. states that tools for follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of trilateral cooperation and dialogue should be created so as to ensure that commitments made by the various parties are kept;

The impact of the economic and financial crisis

24. is concerned about the implications of the international economic and financial crisis for Africa, whereas attention is focused on the situation in developed countries;
25. is concerned that developing countries continue to be relegated to second place. In particular, Africa is outrageously under-represented at the G20, which prevents it from influencing

international decisions aimed at mitigating the economic crisis, despite this having a disproportionate direct and indirect impact on that continent;

26. recalls that the crisis has a disproportionate direct and indirect impact on Africa due to the fragility of that continent's social and economic models. The direct impact is reflected in such things as a fall in exports of raw materials from African countries as a result of the global economic slowdown, a collapse in foreign investment, a risk that the food crisis will be made worse by the credit squeeze, and a loss of revenue due to a fall in remittances by African emigrants who are affected by unemployment in developed countries. The indirect impact is mainly reflected by a reduction in development aid and a reorientation of developed country loans towards supporting domestic economic activity;
27. recalls that the impact of the economic crisis on the African continent is expected, according to IMF calculations, to lead to a slowdown in economic growth, which is expected to be no higher than 3% in 2009, thus ending the average 6% growth seen in the last five years and the gradual recovery of the economic, political and social situation in Africa;
28. considers that the crisis will be all the tougher in Africa due to the weakness of social policies and that it may cause humanitarian, political and social crises that will cause instability in the region and could spark new conflicts;
29. stresses, in this context, the importance of the EU-Africa partnership and the proposed EU-Africa-China cooperation, and the need to maintain and increase the funds set aside for development aid to Africa;
30. regrets that certain Member States have already announced a reduction in their development aid, which amounts to heaping crisis upon crisis in Africa;
31. affirms, in this difficult financial context, the pivotal role of European local and regional authorities, whose action is not limited to providing significant financial aid, but goes beyond this to include the transfer of knowledge and experience and cooperation on specific projects;

B. THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES IN THE EU-AFRICA PARTNERSHIP

The specific nature of local and regional authorities

32. welcomes the involvement of civil society and non-traditional actors in the EU-Africa partnership and the Commission's proposal to launch consultative discussions with key non-institutional actors, including civil society, academia and the private sector, to enable them to play an active role in the implementation and monitoring of the Joint Strategy;

33. reminds the Commission that local and regional authorities need to be distinguished from civil society, that European LRAs have relations with their African counterparts, that they cooperate in such areas as education, municipal services (water and refuse), infrastructure, transport, communications, territorial economic development and support for local governance; that through these projects, they have gained skills, know-how and experience in sectors that are especially important to Africa's economic, social and political development;
34. takes the view that it is therefore essential to give a greater role to European local and regional authorities in the EU-Africa partnership and to make best use of their experience;
35. believes that, through its previous communications, such as that entitled *Local authorities: actors for development*, the Commission has openly recognised the role that local and regional authorities play in international cooperation directed at developing countries; that the European Development Days held from 15 to 17 November 2008 enabled the LRAs and the Committee of the Regions to demonstrate the importance of their contribution to development and the need to allow them to act at European and international level in the areas for which they are responsible;
36. considers that once it is recognised by the Commission, this role needs to be reflected in each of the EU's cooperation strategies, not least vis-à-vis Africa and in the EU/Africa/China dialogue;
37. therefore requests the Commission to broaden and extend the consultation of civil society and non-traditional actors to local and regional authorities, whose involvement is essential, and to the international associations that represent them, to ensure that European and African LRAs participate in the formulation of development policies;
38. undertakes to encourage and support coordination efforts by African local and regional authorities at national and sub-national level to strengthen the structured dialogue between the CoR and European and African local and regional authorities;

Involving local and regional authorities in the partnership

39. believes that, in the context of the EU-Africa partnership, European and African local and regional authorities should be involved at three levels:
 - the formulation of cooperation policies with the Committee of the Regions, which should be involved in drafting a road map for implementing the partnership;
 - the implementation of cooperation projects, so as to help coordinate European Union, African Union, national and LRA initiatives;
 - the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the partnership to ensure its collective ownership and public support;

40. proposes, with this in mind, that the Committee of the Regions be involved in the work of the groups responsible for implementing the thematic partnership, which are made up of the Member States most directly involved, the Commission and the Council Secretariat. The Committee of the Regions recalls that it is involved in the group responsible for democratic governance and human rights and that this involvement should be extended, in particular to the other partnerships in respect of which LRAs have an important role to play, i.e. the Partnership for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the partnership on climate change, and the partnership on migration, mobility and employment;
41. recalls that there are currently no precise, detailed and comprehensive statistics on the total sum that LRAs devote to development cooperation, nor on the priority areas for cooperation or the human resources used; that such information is essential to ensuring the coherence and synergy of such initiatives with the aims of the EU-Africa partnership;
42. therefore stresses the need to equip the EU with statistical and evaluation instruments relating to the decentralised cooperation activities undertaken by European LRAs, particularly in Africa, taking account of the fact that LRAs' activities cannot be measured solely in financial terms, given the significance of the non-material assistance that they provide;
43. is pleased that the Commission now sees the need to create an "exchange" for the purpose of decentralised cooperation so as to promote the exchange of information and the emergence of new local decentralised cooperation partnerships that are consistent with what is already being done;
44. again points out that it is prepared to set up and run, in partnership with the Commission, the above-mentioned "exchange" in the form of an internet portal, which would in a sense form an extension to the annual conference on decentralised cooperation;
45. recalls that the conference on decentralised cooperation must be the key forum for dialogue and strategic policy discussion on decentralised cooperation measures; and that, in this context, particular prominence should be given to EU-Africa relations so as to help strengthen the culture of working together between European and African LRAs, more detailed knowledge of local development issues, and the emergence of strategic guidelines in connection with the EU-Africa partnership;

Promoting the involvement of African local and regional authorities in the partnership

46. considers that the involvement of LRAs in the EU-Africa partnership should not be limited to European authorities alone;
47. stresses that the process of decentralisation under way and the phenomenon of intensive urbanisation in Africa places LRAs at the heart of the development challenges, as do the

consequences of the economic and financial crisis in Africa, which will be felt most acutely at local level;

48. considers that the involvement of African local and regional authorities must be taken into consideration in the context of efforts to make development policies more effective and coherent;
49. therefore calls on the Commission to consult, as well as civil society, non-traditional actors and European LRAs, African local and regional authorities and the national associations that represent them;
50. encourages the international associations of African local authorities to enhance coordination with the African Union and African countries so as to strengthen the synergy between measures undertaken at national and sub-national level in Africa;
51. highlights the role of local and regional authorities, both in Europe and in Africa, in raising public awareness of the issue of development by getting local associations of citizens who care about development issues involved in their specific cooperation projects; and that they thus contribute to the success of the partnership, which depends heavily on public support in the North and the South for the objectives of cooperation and development;

Partnership in the area of democratic governance and human rights

52. recalls that there can be no real democratic governance without meaningful participation of local and regional authorities in the decision-making process;
53. points out that LRAs, through the projects they initiate, promote the strengthening of democracy and the formulation of good governance policies, as shown by the principles and action points set out in the European Charter in Support of Local Governance;
54. emphasises that, thanks to their cooperation in the context of projects aimed at resolving everyday issues, local and regional authorities can help boost confidence in local democracy;
55. highlights the principle concerning the role of decentralised cooperation in development policy reform, namely that better governance is the key to a successful development policy and the key element of good governance is a recognition that the best decisions are taken as near to grassroots level as possible;

Partnership for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

56. draws attention to the fact that many EU local and regional authorities have links with their counterparts in African countries based around development issues. They have thus acquired expertise, particularly in such areas as education, health, research, municipal services (water

and refuse), small-scale fishing and aquaculture, infrastructure, transport, communications, rural development, regional economic development and activities to support the development of local authorities and political decentralisation;

57. points out that LRAs help to strengthen the financial and strategic foundations for the achievement of the MDG, thanks to the funding and non-material assistance that they allocate to projects with their partners in Africa and other developing countries;
58. calls on the Commission to increase funding for and provide better information on the funding instruments and programmes for LRAs' development cooperation measures, as the funds that they release for specific projects directly benefit grass-roots communities and thus help in a more direct and less bureaucratic way to improve the situation on the ground;
59. commits to promoting the *Non-state Actors and Local Authorities in Development* programme among LRAs so that they can fully exploit its potential and, where appropriate, propose amendments to the relevant rules so as to make it easier for LRAs to use;

Partnership on climate change

60. welcomes the fact that the partnership on climate change involves the local level, in particular in the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative, and states that the measures taken must be appropriate to specific local situations and needs, which can vary significantly between and indeed within countries;
61. points out that decentralised development cooperation undertaken by local and regional authorities, by virtue of the many areas in which it works and the diversity of public and private-sector stakeholders it can bring together, is a strong driving force for local and regional development;
62. considers that LRAs can thus stimulate the organisation of production, distribution channels or economic activities that respect people and the environment;

Partnership on migration, mobility and employment

63. points out that local and regional authorities are on the front line with regard to immigration, both in terms of the problems caused by illegal immigration (reception and management of new arrivals, illegal employment, crime and urban security) and in terms of the services they are required to provide to residents (healthcare, education, etc.) and integration policy;
64. notes that the experience some of them have of cross-border and international cooperation, in particular those that are particularly exposed to the problems and consequences of migration, could prove very useful in providing answers to questions relating to migration and mobility;

The other partnerships

65. considers that the added value of LRAs in the other partnerships should not be ignored and that they can, by virtue of their proximity to the relevant populations, play a significant role; with this in mind, it stresses:
- regarding the partnership for peace and security, that it is essential to support any measures to raise public awareness of conflicts that exist on either of the continents and to draw their attention to the particular problems faced by refugees;
 - regarding the partnership for energy, that it is necessary to promote decentralised cooperation measures that focus on renewable energy and the reduction of waste through micro-projects or awareness raising campaigns among stakeholders in the battle against disorderly behaviour in such areas as the production of domestic waste;
 - regarding the partnership on science, information society and space, that it is essential to pay particular attention to supporting the emergence of locally-based projects aimed at bridging the digital divide;
66. considers that, in the light of these comments, the Commission should prioritise its financial support towards decentralised cooperation measures that meet the objectives of the EU-Africa partnership;

C. THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES IN THE TRILATERAL DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU, AFRICA AND CHINA

67. considers that work should start immediately on establishing arrangements for involving African, European and Chinese local and regional authorities in the EU/Africa/China trialogue, in particular as regards determining the themes for cooperation;
68. considers that the themes for cooperation in the trialogue should be expanded, taking account of the expertise and experience of LRAs, in particular in areas for which they are usually responsible, such as education, water, urban transport, waste management, energy and sustainable development, which are key areas for Africa's long-term development and the achievement of the MDG;
69. points out that structural differences exist between European, African and Chinese LRAs, whether in terms of competences, size or financial resources, which makes it all the more necessary to involve LRAs in the partnership quickly so as to foster the development of a culture of working together;
70. agrees that dialogue needs to be organised at continental, regional and country level, but that it is also important to develop it at sub-national level;

71. undertakes to promote trilateral cooperation projects between LRAs in the EU, Africa and China, drawing on its existing contacts and supporting the identification of new partners and new decentralised cooperation measures.

Brussels, 17 June 2009

The President
of the
Committee of the Regions

Luc Van den Brande

The Secretary-General
of the
Committee of the Regions

Gerhard Stahl

II. PROCEDURE

Title	One year after Lisbon: The Africa-EU partnership at work The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation
References	One year after Lisbon: The Africa-EU partnership at work, COM (2008) 617 final, and The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation, COM(2008) 654 final
Legal basis	Article 265(1) TEC
Procedural basis	Optional referral
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Date of President's decision	20 October 2008
Commission responsible	External Relations and Decentralised Cooperation (RELEX)
Rapporteur	Mr Jean-Louis Destans, president of the General Council of the Eure
Analysis	11 December 2008
Discussed in commission	16 February 2009
Date adopted by commission	28 April 2009
Result of the vote in commission	Unanimity
Date adopted in plenary	17 June 2009
Previous Committee opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opinion on <i>The EU - a global partner for development - Speeding up progress towards the Millennium Development Goals</i>, rapporteur: Ms Heini Utunen (FI/ALDE), adopted on 26 November 2008 – Opinion on the <i>Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean: implications for regional authorities</i>, rapporteur: Mr Isidoro Gottardo (IT/EPP), adopted on 9 October 2008¹
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opinion on <i>Governance in the European Consensus on Development</i>, Rapporteur: Ms Juliette Soulabaille (FR/PES), adopted on 6 and 7 June 2007² – Own-initiative opinion on <i>Decentralised cooperation in the reform of the EU's development policy</i>, Rapporteur: Ms Juliette Soulabaille (FR/PES), adopted on 16 and 17 November 2005³.

1 [OJ C 325, 19.12.2008, p. 52.](#)

2 [OJ C 197, 24.8.2007, p. 52.](#)

3 [OJ C 115, 16.7.2006, p. 42.](#)