



*European Economic and Social Committee*

**REX/495**

**A renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership**

## **OPINION**

European Economic and Social Committee

**Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council  
for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership**

[JOIN(2017) 17 final]

Rapporteur: **Mihai MANOLIU**

Consultation	European Commission, 05/07/2017
Legal basis	Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	External Relations
Adopted in section	22/02/2018
Adopted at plenary	15/03/2018
Plenary session No	533
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	185/2/1

## 1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

- 1.1 Given the rapid pace of change in the world today, the EESC considers that 2018 will be decisive for the development of the EU-Africa partnership. Both the European Union and Africa are experiencing profound political, economic and societal changes, and this situation offers opportunities to reshape and deepen the partnership. The EESC therefore feels that, at this juncture, when it comes to development projects carried out in Africa, the EU must place particular emphasis on involving new players, from both the economic sphere and European civil society. Supporting Africa's development should not be left up to the EU institutions alone; European society as a whole must contribute.
- 1.2 The European Economic and Social Committee proposes that the competent European institutions keep up their peace-keeping and security work in Africa and assist African organisations in their efforts to prevent conflict, terrorism and organised crime. The EESC endorses the Africa-EU partnership and agrees that there is a need for an approach which takes account of the current geostrategic situation facing the two continents:
- the humane and dignified management of migration flows perceived as being out of control,
  - the possibility of an influx of refugees;
  - insecurity at the EU's borders generated by the instability of certain political regimes and the absence of the rule of law in some African countries;
  - the increasing influence wielded in Africa by other regional powers such as China – the specific interests regarding Africa's natural resources and bilateral economic relations do not spur on African countries to step up cross-border cooperation;
  - unpredictable action by the US in the area of international policy, and challenges triggered by climate change.
- 1.3 In order to resolve the food problem, the EESC considers that the EU, together with the AU, should identify successful local farming projects and policies and support the roll-out of those models to as many African regions and countries as possible. The overwhelming demographic dynamic cannot be overlooked here: 18 million new jobs a year until 2035 will be needed. Sustainable economic development in Africa is hindered by severe constraints however – which the EU should take into account – that tie in closely with the following issues:
- its high dependency on intensive exploitation of natural resources (illegal trade in resources);
  - its propensity to trigger instability as a result of war, human rights violations, social inequality, fundamentalism and climate disasters;
  - the impact of climate change;
  - the impact of food and water shortages;
  - hygiene issues;
  - epidemics and infectious diseases;
  - the lack of coherent agricultural policies geared to local circumstances.
- 1.4 These problems lead to forced and voluntary displacements and contribute to a considerable extent to irregular migration which is often run by organised crime and increases the pressure on governance systems and political leadership in the countries of origin and transit. Europe can respond by means of a new European Consensus on Development, European neighbourhood

policy and a European agenda on migration, and by developing a relationship based on the concept of partnership. Along with genuine representatives of Africa's civil society (platform, forum and volunteers) and social partners, the EESC can make a key contribution to democracy and human rights.

- 1.5 The EESC would ask that the future partnership take greater account of civil society, giving it a stronger role that goes from consultation to monitoring policy implementation. This is important for ensuring coherence in development policies and for ensuring effective stakeholder involvement. The EU could thus be a model of best practice for the countries of Africa as regards involving civil society in decision making and designing programmes to promote the emergence of international civil society in Africa. Moreover, where civil society is non-existent or very weak, the EU should play an active role in its development.
- 1.6 Given that education, the non-discriminatory transfer of knowledge and unfettered access to culture are strategically important for cooperation and the sharing of common values, as well as for opening up good prospects to a considerable number of young Africans, the EESC proposes that the future EU-Africa partnership should go in the following direction:
  - successful European programmes such as Erasmus+ should be extended to Africa, thus enabling the mobility of students and teachers on both continents and facilitating an exchange of academic experience;
  - partnerships between European and African universities (leading to the development of common projects and study programmes) must be encouraged and given financial support;
  - only good quality education programmes and strategies to combat social exclusion can put a stop to religious fundamentalism in some African countries.
- 1.7 The EESC believes that the most important model that the EU can offer Africa is its own example of cross-border cooperation, and the implementation of large-scale cross-border projects, such as infrastructure projects, insofar as the African countries involved agree to cooperate among themselves on the implementation of the projects. Moreover, the EU must be aware of the know-how that it can offer, as regards policies for moving to a democratic society and a functional, competitive and inclusive market economy.
- 1.8 The EESC proposes that the partnership aim to promote and bring about gender equality and the empowerment of women and young people, and to recognise their contribution to peace and the construction of the state, economic growth, technological development, poverty reduction, health and wellbeing, and cultural and human development. All forms of violence and social, economic and political discrimination against women must be eliminated from the African continent, so that they have full access to equal rights.
- 1.9 The EESC would point out that China has recently emerged as Africa's top economic partner, which may affect the external policy goals of countries in the region and make them less interested in implementing democratic reforms. The EU therefore needs a partnership with Africa to renew and step up the trade relationship in real terms between the two continents and establish optimum conditions at local level for European investors.

- 1.10 The EESC recommends introducing good governance clauses in all relevant agreements between the EU and third countries or regions with a view to promoting sustainable development. A prerequisite for sustainable development is a responsible, transparent, active, fair, inclusive, efficient and participatory policy framing process which upholds the principles of the rule of law.
- 1.11 The EESC regrets that Africa is the world's poorest continent and the only one to see an increase in poverty. It is intolerable that over 50% of its population lives in absolute poverty. An international campaign to combat poverty is needed, involving the chief development stakeholders and strategies and action plans aimed at disadvantaged communities. We need a new financial package which can be planned and predicted. The EESC also considers that ensuring effective follow-up to financial aid is crucial if the objectives set are to be better achieved.
- 1.12 The EESC welcomes Africa's wish, voiced through Agenda 2063 and the establishment of the African Union, to be treated as a single, integrated and pan-African entity. Good governance for sustainable development must be based on sound and socially and environmentally fair economic policies, the establishment of incorruptible democratic institutions which are receptive to what people need, the promotion of civil society, combating social exclusion, and the pursuit of economic cohesion. The rule of law and the supremacy of the law, human rights and equal opportunities must not be overlooked. An investment-friendly environment can lead to success.

## 2. **Background**

- 2.1 The EU and most of the countries in Africa are already linked by a comprehensive and legally binding international cooperation agreement which brings together more than half of the world's nation states. The Cotonou partnership agreement (Cotonou Agreement) was signed in Benin in 2000 with the aim of reinforcing long-term cooperation between the EU and the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries in the area of politics, trade and development. The agreement has led to the setting up of a number of institutions to facilitate cooperation between ACP and EU governments, officials, MPs, local authorities and civil society, including the private sector.
- 2.2 Given the geographical proximity, the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy points out that promoting peace and development on the African continent is in fact an investment in the peace and prosperity of the EU. A safe and prosperous EU is extremely difficult to achieve if its neighbouring regions are underdeveloped and in conflict. The EU must therefore be deeply and actively involved in completing the African Union and in kickstarting economic growth in the region.
- 2.3 The EESC notes that the international arena has changed considerably recently: new global challenges have emerged, people's security has been undermined, and the fight against poverty and epidemics, climate change and desertification, migration and the sustainable management of public goods are having an impact on the policies of African countries and the EU alike.

- 2.4 We need a new shared political vision for Africa and the EU: it must be tangible and based on common interests and values, mutual respect and the principle of individual sovereignty, and reflect the legitimate aspirations of both parties. The shared will of both entities should be translated into an equal, conscious and preferential partnership in order to continue to promote peace (the African Peace Facility), security (Africa – a key security provider), sustainable development, human rights and regional and continental integration.
- 2.5 The EESC regrets that Africa is the world's poorest continent and the only one to see an increase in poverty. It is intolerable that over 50% of its population lives in absolute poverty. An international campaign to combat poverty is needed, involving the chief development stakeholders and strategies and action plans aimed at disadvantaged communities. We need a new financial package which can be planned and predicted. The EESC also considers that ensuring effective follow-up to financial aid is crucial if the objectives set are to be better achieved.
- 2.6 The EESC welcomes Africa's wish, voiced through Agenda 2063 and the establishment of the African Union, to be treated as a single, integrated and pan-African entity. Good governance for sustainable development must be based on sound and socially and environmentally fair economic policies, the establishment of incorruptible democratic institutions which are receptive to what people need, the promotion of civil society, combating social exclusion, and the pursuit of economic cohesion. The rule of law and the supremacy of the law, human rights and equal opportunities must not be overlooked. An investment-friendly environment can lead to success.
- 2.7 Efficiency and mutual and individual accountability require considerable long-term human and financial resources, with both parties living up to their commitments. The EESC is of the view that civil society can be involved through a voluntary platform and support the development process. Non-state actors and local authorities must be involved as a matter of urgency, fully and at every stage, including monitoring and evaluation. They can not only provide fresh impetus for Africa's development, but also increase the legitimacy of the EU's external action, and reduce Euroscepticism in Europe. The shared vision must incorporate participatory democracy, pluralism and fundamental freedoms, all of which can be summed up as compliance with the rule of law.
- 2.8 Another major threat is the dwindling of Africa's natural resources, which will be an obstacle to poverty reduction. Ecosystem services, including carbon storage by rainforests, must be offset. We need a common approach to global challenges and a single, people-centric partnership, which takes a continent to continent approach, both politically and more practically during negotiations.
- 2.9 The EESC believes that the parties must demonstrate responsibility and coherence as regards mutual accountability, dialogue and contributions. Furthermore, the future agreement should be based on the principle of *partnership*. The partners have equal rights and responsibilities (development practices and investments). There is a discrepancy, however, as regards integration and human, technical and financial resources; EU-African political dialogue must therefore be developed and placed on a stronger footing.

- 2.10 Sustainable development and the eradication of poverty are a complementary goal (better coordination by donors and non-state actors) and a commitment for EU-Africa cooperation, identified in European policies in the areas of trade (free access to the EU market within economic partnership agreements), the environment and agriculture.
- 2.11 The EESC would point out that the global approach to conflicts must be based on responsibility, prevention, resolution, management and reconstruction. Peace is essential and the first step towards sustainable development which is fair politically, economically and socially, in accordance with the full respect of human rights. Greater vigilance is needed regarding the emergence of ethnic and religious tensions in Africa and particular attention must be paid to exports of arms (code of conduct), including arms trafficking.

### 3. **General comments**

- 3.1 The joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council *for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership* is a coordinated and consolidated response which is in line with the **2063 Agenda** and the *Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*. The communication feeds into the reflection process, which is the starting point for future coherent negotiations on the Africa pillar.
- 3.2 The EESC believes that the EU has a strategic and political interest, based on established common values and shared interests, to deepen and adapt a lasting partnership with Africa. The EU should become the top foreign investor and humanitarian and trade partner, as well as a security provider.
- 3.3 The EU is working towards three strategic objectives:
- stronger mutual engagement and increased cooperation in the international arena, based on common values and shared interests, including in bilateral relations;
  - security, on land and at sea, and the fight against international threats as an investment in security on both continents;
  - sustainable and inclusive economic development in Africa to create the jobs that the continent needs and to seize the opportunities for Europe.
- 3.4 The EESC agrees that an ambitious common agenda can be achieved by:
- deepening coalitions on global governance issues, increased dialogue and effective cooperation, strategic partners and key allies, promoting and supporting the rule of law and justice;
  - increasing cooperation on common interests based on frequent political interaction at multilateral, continental, regional, national and local level, in line with the subsidiarity principle;
  - delivering a partnership centred on people, political authorities, local authorities, the social partners, the private sector and the whole civil society.

- 3.5 The EESC believes that the EU-Africa joint strategy must be based on a robust policy of sustainable development based on what is actually happening at grassroots level in Africa; this is a prerequisite for efficient aid to combat poverty equitably, promote healthy growth in the fields of the economy, the environment (devastating climate change) and society, based on work which is decent (long-term jobs), productive, free, able to combat poverty and social exclusion, ethical and dignified. Boosting local production, guaranteeing food security and a decent income for family farms and SMEs and establishing an internal market (property rights and less red tape and corruption) can all help combat poverty. Therefore, common policies must focus particularly on agriculture and food security. They must support sustainable farming models geared towards small-scale land owners who provide jobs by developing specific sectors. Both the EU and the AU have a duty to identify successful farming models and policies and promote them among disadvantaged communities in the same or other countries.
- 3.6 Combating desertification and access to water for all are determining factors for food security, migration and the existence of refugees. Africa is the continent hit hardest by climate change. The EU and the AU, along with the Member States, economic players and investors must shoulder their responsibilities (take action against climate change) and establish a flexible and effective financial framework for a new environmental approach.
- 3.7 The existence of free trade that respects environmental and social standards can spur on economic growth and social and political progress; it has a tangible impact as a catalyst for poverty reduction by promoting sustainable development across the board. An asymmetric approach favouring Africa's markets is needed in order to bring about regional integration and establish a reliable framework for trade and investment. Economic partnership agreements foster trade and regional integration insofar as they support development and provide derogations to enable local industries in transition to adapt to new market conditions. EU-Africa economic relations must be based on fair trade and a tailored and diversified approach leading to African integration which will generate necessary and competitive products and services.
- 3.8 One key factor in economic development and the eradication of poverty is the EU-Africa energy partnership which has the potential to lead to projects to supply efficient energy from renewable sources at affordable prices. In this case, Africa's climate and geographical situation can be an advantage, particularly as regards solar power. Access to energy can drive on Africa's economic and social development.
- 3.9 The EESC believes that commitment in the area of education and health for all is an effective and practical tool in a common development strategy aimed at people living in poverty. The strategy must contribute to mainstreaming the fundamental issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Vulnerable communities and refugees fleeing humanitarian crises must not be overlooked. Access to health services and the fight against counterfeit medication are pivotal in the fight against fatal diseases, a very serious issue which is on the rise. Relevant legal and criminal measures are also needed.
- 3.10 The EESC proposes that regular analysis be carried out of both the main causes of migration and emigrants' rights and integration, including the migration of values. We need practical solutions to secure efficient circular migration. Barriers are not a solution; dialogue founded on



national and regional identity, solidarity and culture can form the basis for an agenda of sustainable development for all, insofar as this dialogue is also properly resourced.

3.11 The EESC believes that debts are a burden which undermines every effort to bring about sustainable development for all. Debt management, taken on a case-by-case basis, must take a back seat to stronger economic and social policies and more efficient governance. Managing debts and transferring them to other creditors must be key for budgetary support (based on performance indicators) for the provision of basic social services, and thus consolidate the structure of African countries. Transparent oversight is needed, and local authorities and civil society must be given a role in this.

#### 4. **Specific comments**

4.1 The EESC considers that Agenda 2063 (envisioning a peaceful, secure and prosperous Africa, an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law and an Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its young people – in particular young women – and leaving no one behind), a transformative agenda aiming to reform Africa, must be structured around two main strands:

– **creating more resilient states and societies:**

- prevent conflicts, address crises and work on peacebuilding;
- strengthen governance systems;
- manage migration and mobility;

– **creating more and better jobs, especially for young people:**

- attract responsible and sustainable investments;
- energise Africa;
- transform African agriculture and agro-businesses, and its blue economy, including fisheries;
- promote the work of the social partners;
- advance knowledge and skills.

4.2 The creation of more resilient states and societies is based on legitimate aspirations, the AU's values and goals, its presently fragile borders and threats to its vital interests. Terrorism, human trafficking, crime and violent extremism are threats to stability and peace and symptoms of possible deep structural instability.

4.3 The EU has therefore identified the following flagship initiatives:

- establish a cooperation platform bringing together the UN and European, African and international partners;
- make an initial contribution to the AU Peace Fund;
- support African initiatives in the field of maritime security.

4.4 It is well known that good governance, security and development are the cornerstones of a strong, modern and resilient society with democratic, effective, transparent and accountable institutions. Such stable societies, which respect human rights, the core of sustainable development, operate in a predictable and stable macroeconomic framework which is able to

deliver public services. In this area, the EU can contribute to Africa's development by means of the know-how it can offer through the experience built up by certain Member States as regards policies for moving to a democratic society and a functional market economy, with a social and territorial cohesion policy, as well as through its model of cross-border cooperation, involving common institutions.

4.5 The EU has therefore identified the following flagship initiatives:

- a joint AU-EU high-level conference on electoral processes, democracy and governance in Africa and Europe;
- double support to domestic resource mobilisation (Tax Initiative) by 2020;
- joint action to strengthen sustainable management of natural resources, joint EU-Africa charter.

4.6 Mobility and migration are important economic, social and security-related issues which can enrich and strengthen societies but also destabilise them if not managed properly and effectively. Migration flows and displacement are more dangerous than ever before in terms of the physical integrity of the migrants. In this regard, there is a shared responsibility and global solutions based on responsibility-sharing and solidarity laid down in a political framework which is key for addressing large movements of refugees and migrants.

4.7 The EU has therefore identified the following flagship initiatives:

- support African initiatives on regular inter-African migration and mobility (free movement, social protection schemes, portability, recognition of skills);
- increase Africa-EU cooperation in the fight against smuggling and trafficking networks.

4.8 We need a paradigm shift to create a prosperous continent, with the means and resources to drive its own development and where economies are structurally transformed through industrialisation, manufacturing and value addition to create shared growth through private sector development, entrepreneurship and decent jobs for all.

4.9 The EESC appreciates the fact that social and economic transformation must be compatible with the challenges and opportunities of major climate change and the concept of environmental sustainability. Regional markets and an investment-friendly climate need to be created to generate adequate added value through stable and predictable free trade made possible by economic partnership agreements.

4.10 The EESC flags up the need to respect good corporate governance and environmental and social standards in order to advance economic integration in Africa at regional and continental level. Opportunities must be seized to create the green, blue and circular economies, based on corporate social responsibility, social entrepreneurship and ethical business codes, with a view to establishing a continental free trade area.

4.11 The business world plays a key role in developing society: it is a major investor and innovator, generating skills and jobs, supporting economic growth and providing a source of (direct and indirect) revenue, which can generate public revenue for necessary investments in wellbeing and in key areas of infrastructure such as schools and/or hospitals; it is also a means of

integration – for young people and for migrants, giving individuals the chance to develop and have a stable income.

4.12 The EU has therefore identified the following flagship initiatives:

- generate massive EU investments in Africa via the European External Investment Plan and the Compact with Africa;
- support a more predictable and conducive investment climate in Africa;
- support Africa's digital agenda.

4.13 The EESC believes that universal access to affordable energy from sustainable and renewable sources is an opportunity for decent new jobs and real development which takes account of climate change. The EU and Africa can step up their joint efforts to bring about the transition to clean energy, on the basis of a set of common values. The EU is a world champion in promoting clean energy. Africa's potential for generating electricity and using it efficiently on the basis of proper rules calls for substantial investment which can satisfy the demand, as there are possibilities for links with European transmission networks. Climate change can be offset by generating electricity from renewable sources.

4.14 The EU has therefore identified the following flagship initiatives:

- deliver the EU contribution to the AREI and reach 5 GW of renewable energy generation capacity by 2020, while giving 30 million people in Africa access to sustainable energy and saving 11 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year;
- launch a new initiative to facilitate EU-Africa public-private cooperation on increased investments in Africa's sustainable energy sector via a high-level platform;
- launch a new EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership on climate change and sustainable energy.

4.15 The EESC would point out that agriculture, livestock, aquaculture and fisheries are an important source of income which is vital for Africa and provides a means of subsistence. Unsustainable management of resources, land property issues, maritime insecurity and not least lack of both capital and access to financing are key obstacles to sustainable development in this sector. Food production, which has considerable potential for development, can create jobs and empower people as well as ensuring food security.

4.16 It is possible to generate added value for Africa's natural resources, while pursuing a policy of industrialisation which emphasises the creation of micro, small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises. The EESC flags up the importance of the role of responsible value chains which generate rural development and manage water and land resources strategically and sustainably. Economic partnership agreements need to be established and market opportunities for African food products seized.

4.17 The EU has therefore identified the following flagship initiatives:

- spur on value chain development by facilitating responsible investment in a sustainable agrifood sector and blue economy;
- generate EU and African investments to support research and innovation;

- expand as appropriate the network of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements between the EU and African countries.
- 4.18 The EESC considers that free and non-discriminatory access to education is a prerequisite for permanent sustainable development. African education and vocational education and training systems must be linked much more closely to labour market needs, in line with economic, social and demographic development. The systems must be innovative and focus on education and training in order to generate services and businesses which will create the means of subsistence needed to move from the informal to the formal economy. Africa needs to actively promote science, technology, research and innovation.
- 4.19 The EESC believes that we need a partnership to promote equal opportunities, reduce inequality and increase inclusiveness. Cohesion, equity, diversity and inclusiveness are key for promoting knowledge and skills for a new African culture.
- 4.20 The EU has therefore identified the following flagship initiatives:
- launch an African Youth facility, expanding the scope of the Erasmus+ programme;
  - provide financial support for cooperation between European and African universities, and develop joint study programmes;
  - establish an EU vocational education and training facility.
- 4.21 Erasmus+ supports cooperation between the European Union and Africa in the area of higher education. Projects involving the relevant partners in the two regions contribute, inter alia, to improving the career prospects of students, strengthening academic cooperation, and forging networks between higher education institutions. Higher education cooperation with Africa is in line with the objectives of the EU's foreign policy and, in particular, with development cooperation.

Brussels, 15 March 2018

Georges DASSIS  
The president of the European Economic and Social Committee

---