



**Interparliamentary Conference for
the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)
and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**
Senate of the Republic, 5 - 7 November 2014

BREAKOUT SESSION: EU-AFRICA RELATIONS

EU-Africa Relations

The conclusions of the interparliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP held in Athens in April 2014 focused on the following issues: common security and defence policy in Africa in view of the first French-German deployment under the EU flag in Mali; delay in the deployment of the EU mission in the Central African Republic; relevance of the crisis in the Sahel and the sub-Saharan region for the interest and security of European citizens.

Regarding the EU-Africa summit in Brussels in April 2014, the conclusions of the Conference reiterated that peace and security are essential for the development and prosperity of the African continent and forcefully upheld African aspirations and commitments to ensure peace, security and stability.

1) Development aid agreements

Early EU-Africa relations were of a commercial nature: the **Yaoundé convention** (1964-1975) offered commercial advantages and financial aid and the **Lomé conventions** (1975-2000) were based on a system of generalized preference and access to the European market for the near totality (99.5%) of goods produced by ACP Countries (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific).

In the year 2000, the Cotonou agreement, financially supported by the European Development Fund (EDF) for a twenty-year period, introduced a new approach to development aid. Aiming at eradicating poverty through wider participation of ACP Countries in the world economy, the agreement envisages more room for the political dimension and ensures its implementation via joint ACP-EU institutions.

2) The joint EU-Africa strategy

A more structured political dialogue between the European Union and Africa was inaugurated in 2000 at the Cairo summit, which generated regular meetings at official and ministerial level, and was followed by the summits of Lisbon in 2007, Tripoli in 2010 and Brussels in 2014.

A Joint EU-Africa strategy, i.e. as a non-legally-binding political framework aimed at implementing strategic and political partnership between the two continents also by expanding aid, was adopted at the Lisbon Summit.

The aims pursued by the strategy are:

- 1) overcoming the narrow boundaries of conventional development aid, by expanding Africa-EU relations so as to incorporate other areas of common interest, like employment and trade;
- 2) overcoming issues of solely African interest, to tackle more global challenges;
- 3) supporting Africa's aspirations to develop a trans-regional and continental response to such major challenges;



- 4) enabling partnership based on people, by enhancing the involvement of African and European citizens.

Eight partnerships were thus identified: peace and security, democratic governance and human rights; trade, regional integration and infrastructure; millennium development goals; energy; climate change and environment; migration, mobility and employment; science, information society and space.

The strategy was implemented through two consecutive action plans: the first covering the period 2008-2010 and the second covering the period 2011-2013.

3) The African Union

In 2002, the African Union (AU) succeeded the Organization of African Unity as an international organization with a regional focus bringing together the Countries of Africa. It has endowed itself with a complex structure whose main bodies are: the Assembly, consisting of the Heads of State and Government; the Commission, i.e. the Secretariat of the Union: the Executive Council, consisting of Ministers or their representatives; the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Strategic co-operation¹ between the EU and the African Union started with the Lisbon Summit in 2007 and developed over the years through:

- 1) regular ministerial ("Troika") meetings, gathering on the one hand the representatives of the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of the African Union and of the AU Commission and, on the other, the EU Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the European Commission and the EU Council, together with the European External Action Service;
- 2) "Commission-Commission" meetings

4) Fourth EU-Africa Summit (2-3 April 2014)

The Fourth EU-Africa Summit was held on 2-3 April 2014 in Brussels. It focused on the theme "Investing in People, Prosperity and Peace". Over 60 European and African leaders were present. Top political leaders were involved together with civil society and the business world.

Three documents were adopted at the end of the Summit:

- 1) a political declaration, in which the Heads of State and Government renewed their commitment to achieving the goals of the joint strategy;
- 2) a roadmap 2014-2017, to speed up the implementation of the joint strategy. The document focuses on five priority areas: peace and security; democracy, good governance and human rights; human development; sustainable and inclusive development and growth and continental integration; global and emerging issues;
- 3) a declaration and action plan on migration and mobility, in which the Countries involved committed to fighting illegal migration; combating the trafficking of human beings; strengthening international protection in order to prevent further loss of lives; advancing legal migration and mobility; strengthening the link between migration and mobility.

Items for further discussion

➤ **Is the outcome of the 4th EU-Africa Summit deemed to be satisfactory?**

¹ For further details see the [Internet site on Africa-EU partnership](#) and the publication "[The Africa-EU Partnership: 2 Unions, 1 Vision](#)", European Union and African Union.



The outcome of the Summit may seem to be disappointing with respect to expectations even though the wish to establish firm partnership centred on economic issues and with global aspirations was consolidated. This approach could be useful in order to outgrow the donor-recipient template. At the same time, it could entail the risk that controversial issues be overlooked in exchange for the pursuit of immediate economic interests².

➤ **Will the economic partnership agreements (EPA) produce real benefits to participating African countries?**

Decades of unilateral trade preference granted by European Countries to African partners close to previous regimes under a number of Lomé Conventions proved incapable of promoting real growth and diversified exports. The new EPA agreements should therefore be verified also as to how they are implemented and how their outcome is monitored³.

➤ **What priorities should the EU-Africa political dialogue focus on?**

- Identifying a clear level of political leadership among the parties?
- Taking on new commitments for co-funded initiatives and joint decision-making processes on the use of existing and new financial instruments?
- Making sure that the partnership is consistent with African and European global and long-term continental strategies?
- Defining the most relevant levels (continental, regional, national) of the operational side of the strategy, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle?⁴

Although never interrupted, political dialogue between Africa and Europe may be considered to have been characterized by the two sides often having distant positions on basic approach and interests at play. The distance is considered significant even with regard to the notion itself of partnership, construed by Europeans to mean governance and democracy, by Africans to mean development.

This gap is considered to have been an obstacle to the formation of a solid alliance between the two continents. The EU and Africa are seen to have all possible interest in sharing a vision of change through which they could have an impact on international negotiations since they represent a group of over 80 countries. And within the United Nations they could weigh considerably on the UN decision-making process even though the growing political and economic influence of Asia on Africa is to be borne in mind⁵.

➤ **How should a future EU-Africa partnership on peace and security be structured?**

The Summit held last April in Brussels emphasized the importance of security as a top priority for political, civil-military and financial co-operation. Besides, peace and security is one of the sectors that has proven to be most fruitful and where the most important results were achieved, given the urgent need to respond to the conflicts under way in Africa. The EU is undoubtedly a priority strategic partner for Africa, with financial resources varying with

² European Parliament, Directorate-general for external policies, "[At a glance. EU-Africa summit: a blueprint for action?](#)", April 2014.

³ CeSPI, [Le relazioni tra UE e Africa dopo il 4° vertice del 2-3 aprile 2014](#), October 2014.

⁴ "[The implementation of the Joint Africa-Europe strategy: rebuilding confidence and commitments](#)", European Parliament, 2014.

⁵ CeSPI, *Ibid.*



the economic cycles. The so-called “partnership between equals” will be difficult to come about unless Africa starts to depend less on external aid and until it reaches a higher level of financial self-sufficiency by combining continental and regional efforts.⁶

➤ **How can EU-Africa co-operation on migration be implemented more effectively?**

For the Mediterranean, the results are modest in spite of the programmes implemented by the EU and its Member States.

In the two continents there is a different perception of the phenomenon: Africans complain that Europeans do not reconcile aid policies – emphasizing the positive ties between migration and development – with security policies – focusing on the prevention of illegal migrations and the fight against the trafficking of migrants and human beings: Europe is perceived as applying double standards, as it focuses on democracy and human rights in Africa but not in other parts of the world (the Gulf Countries, for instance). Alongside the Rabat process the Italian Presidency deems it necessary to promote the development of a dialogue on migration with Eastern African Countries.

In this framework, migration was identified as a priority by the European Commission and the Italian Presidency; the Fourth Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development will be held in Rome on the 26-27 November under the umbrella of the Rabat process launched in July 2006..

These are partnership areas of strategic importance, where the true challenge, also in view of the outcome of the April summit, will be to face the real difficulties that have weakened the effectiveness of the Africa-EU alliance so far and to adopt a totally new political angle and will.

⁶ CeSPI, *ibid.*