

14th EUROPEAN UNION - SOUTH AFRICA MINISTERIAL POLITICAL DIALOGUE

14 JULY 2020 (by video conference)

1. The European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles, and the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Dr Naledi Pandor, co-chaired the 14th session of the Ministerial Political Dialogue in the context of the Strategic Partnership on 14 July 2020, by video-conference. The meeting was also attended by the European Union Commissioner for Trade, Mr Phil Hogan, the European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships, Ms Jutta Urpilainen, the South African Ministers of Trade, Industry and Competition, Mr Ebrahim Patel and the South African Minister of Finance Mr Tito Titus Mboweni.
2. Both sides discussed how to adapt their strategic partnership within the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact, political, social and economic priorities in South Africa and the European Union, and the preparation of the European Union (EU) - African Union (AU) Summit.
3. Both sides reaffirmed their goal of strengthening the rules-based international order, human rights, universal values and multilateralism. Both sides shared their concern about the impact of COVID-19 on developing countries and least developed countries, the majority of which are in Africa. They underlined the importance of global solidarity and multilateral cooperation in relation to COVID-19 response as demonstrated by the “Team Europe” support package and the EU hosted “Worldwide Vaccine Pledging Marathon” to accelerate development and production of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines against the coronavirus, and their universal deployment. The appointment by President Cyril Ramaphosa - in his capacity as Chair of the African Union - of Special Envoys to mobilise international economic support for Africa’s efforts to address severe economic challenges that African countries are facing because of the COVID-19 pandemic, is an important contribution to fostering coordinated action.
4. Both sides acknowledged the outcomes of the European Union - South Africa dialogues on thematic issues, engagements between South Africa and European Union institutions as well as those between South Africa and European Union Member States. Both sides expressed the view that cooperation deserves a stronger focus on joint assessment and communication of results.

International situation, peace and security issues

5. Both sides discussed the UN Security Council agenda, including the priorities set for South Africa’s Presidency of the Security Council in December 2020, which will mark the end of the country’s current non-permanent membership. Both sides stressed the importance of EU-UN-AU trilateral cooperation and discussed a range of current political and security issues in Africa, in Europe and beyond. Both sides support the United Nations Secretary-General’s (UNSG) call for a global ceasefire in the context of COVID-19 and in this regard welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 2532(2020). Both sides are committed to work together to ensure that ongoing peace processes, humanitarian aid and situations of fragility do not suffer from the impact of the pandemic.

6. Both sides updated each other on the preparations of the 6th EU-AU Summit agreed to take place on 28/29 October 2020 in Brussels and pledged an ambitious outcome with joint strategic priorities for the years to come. The European Union shared with South Africa its vision and proposals put forward in the Communication: “Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa,” as well as in the EU’s Global Response to COVID-19. South Africa welcomed the solidarity expressed by the EU in support of the AU’s recovery from COVID-19, as well as the implementation of South Africa’s national stimulus programme. South Africa shared developments on the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA). Both sides emphasized the importance of continental integration as a fundamental element of their recovery strategies.
7. The EU-AU Summit provides an opportunity to work together to advance all three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) as well as peace and governance agenda, as part of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and longer-term strategic cooperation. South Africa and the European Commission are collaborating actively in the organisation of the first AU-EU Ministerial Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation, due to take place on 16 July 2020, which will specifically consider partnerships responding to COVID-19. Both sides agreed that the AU-EU meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs scheduled for the first half of September would be a key stepping-stone on the road to the EU-AU Summit.

Trade, economic transformation and green recovery after COVID-19

8. Both sides reviewed opportunities for enhancing two-way trade and boosting investment co-operation under existing multilateral and bilateral frameworks. As both share a common interest in a stable, fair, and inclusive rules-based multilateral trading system centred on the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the two sides exchanged views on WTO reform that is cognisant of the needs of all members, including developing countries. Both sides recognized the importance of moving forward in the ongoing negotiations in view of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference.
9. Both sides also discussed economic diplomacy strategies to improve the business and investment climate and to develop resilient, diversified and sustainable national, regional and bilateral value chains in sectors with growth potential. In light of the economic impact of COVID-19, South Africa emphasised the importance of investment to support South Africa’s industrial development objectives. Both sides expressed the intention to seize opportunities provided by the EU – Southern African Development Community (SADC) Economic Partnership Agreement to scale up bi-lateral trade and investment relations.
10. Both sides acknowledged that alignment with South Africa National Development Plan, with a focus on addressing inequalities and just transition within the economy, remained relevant for future cooperation addressing South Africa’s socio-economic challenges.
11. Both sides shared their assessment that the global economic crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated poverty, inequality and unemployment, represents an opportunity to pursue an inclusive, greener and sustainable economic recovery in alignment with their national priorities. This, they agreed, is a way of achieving resilient economic growth, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable sectors of society and creating jobs for the future - especially in Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) - while stepping up action on climate change, sustainable energy systems, addressing the biodiversity crisis and other environmental challenges. The EU offered to continue support to South Africa’s economic transformation through facilitation of investment, of sharing of technology and provision of expertise for green,

fair, inclusive, and just economic recovery. As an urgent measure, the EU allocates EUR 2 million to South African national parks and wildlife reserves to help countering the loss of tourism revenues.

12. Both sides intend to scale up cooperation and jointly endeavour for higher ambition in the multilateral sphere, including in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement, the Montreal Protocol, and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including the negotiation of a new ambitious post 2020 global biodiversity framework. Both sides recognize the importance of mobilising both public and private capital towards sustainable investments and to support a global transition to a low-carbon and resilient economy. In this regard, they expressed their determination to reinforce bilateral and multilateral cooperation on sustainable finance.
13. Both sides highlighted the role that cooperation in research and innovation has played in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis through scientific advice as well as research, including co-funding provided by South Africa to the flagship European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). They appreciated the role that science, technology and innovation will continue to play for the socio-economic recovery of South Africa and the European Union.
14. Both sides emphasised the need for universal, timely and equitable access to and fair distribution of all quality, safe, efficacious and affordable essential health technologies and products including their components and precursors required in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic as a global priority, and the urgent removal of unjustified obstacles thereto; consistent with the provisions of relevant international treaties including the provisions of the Agreement on the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the flexibilities within the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.

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