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Great Insights

Navigating the new normal: EU-AU partnerships in the post-covid era



EU-African relations are a strategic issue: Here's why
Josep Borell, HR/VP Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Commission

Mayors on migration
Interview with Yvonne Aki-Sawyer, Mayor of Freetown and Giuseppe Sala, Mayor of Milan

AU-EU partnership: Goals and expectations
Levi Uche Madueke, Head of African Union Strategic Partnerships

ECDPM's Great Insights magazine offers a quick and accessible summary of cutting-edge analysis on international cooperation and Europe-Africa relations. It includes an independent overview of analysis and commentary from a wide variety of experts and high-level officials and provides updates on policy debates in Africa and Europe.

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Editorial

The year began with high expectations for the AU-EU partnership. Then COVID-19 hit, spreading first to Europe, then to Africa, drastically shifting priorities and postponing the sixth AU-EU summit to 2021.

In this mix, countries jostled around the supply of medical equipment and support to partner countries to tackle the pandemic. African countries, for their part, became more vocal about what they needed to address domestically, the pandemic's impacts on their populations and economies, especially on the issue of debt waivers and relief. After initially struggling to show a united response to the pandemic domestically, the EU played an active role in trying to develop multilateral responses. COVID-19 equally created space for introspection. African and European countries are reassessing their relationships in light of these changing dynamics.

This issue of *Great Insights* continues along that introspective path. Contributors explore the essence of the partnership between the AU and EU from their perspectives as policymakers, business leaders, city officials and individual thinkers. Their insights push decision makers to reimagine the relationship as they navigate the pandemic-induced 'new normal'.

We start by exploring the political relationship between Europe and Africa. The partnership's undiminished strategic importance is re-emphasised by plans on both continents to promote and redesign AU-EU cooperation moving forward. In a futuristic twist, one contributor presents a glimpse of what AU-EU relations could be like in 2030. Others highlight innovative actions policymakers are now taking to move beyond rhetoric and jointly find solutions for development finance, climate change, migration and the circular economy. At the level of individual businesses, too, the AU-EU relationship brings opportunities. Partnerships in the agricultural sector, for example, could be scaled up to increase Africa's food security. At the institutional level, contributors

explore the changes that may be needed to move the partnership forward. Cooperation in governance will be especially important on the heels of the global pandemic. It will also be important to consolidate the achievements of the AU and EU in peace and security support. The potential for cooperation in research and innovation is another area that needs to be firmly grasped.

From the articles, it is evident that moving the relationship forward and navigating the new normal requires policymakers in the AU and EU to jettison old habits and rhetoric. We need comprehensive approaches to promote the well-being of people on both continents. The challenges ahead, in responding to and rebuilding from COVID-19, mean that the next steps will not always be clear. But we remain optimistic. In the words of an old sailor, 'Though we cannot control the winds, we can adjust our sails!'

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Great Insights*, and welcome your comments and suggestions.

Guest editors

Amanda Bisong Policy Officer Migration Programme

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EU-African relations are a strategic issue. Here's why

For European foreign policy, there are, perhaps, just three issues that truly qualify as 'strategic': The extent we manage to shape events in our neighbourhood; the way we navigate the growing strategic competition between the US and China and the nature of our future partnership with Africa and the kind of social-political model that will prevail on that continent. It is necessary to think about EU-Africa relations in these terms, as a strategic issue that deserves the highest level of attention.

By Josep Borell

A diverse and changing continent

Africa is diverse. It is also changing rapidly – and not just in the demographic or security terms we often hear about. That diversity and change presents as many opportunities as challenges. For example, Africa hosts six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world, and at the same time 36 of the world's most fragile countries. It is taking clear steps in the direction of continental integration – look at the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Young people everywhere in Africa are demanding a

greater say. Entrepreneurship and e-business are enabling some to leapfrog in development terms. Examples are the advent of the mobile payment system M-PESA and talk of the rising 'Silicon Savannah'. No wonder Africa is being courted by China, the Gulf states and others.

While these new relationships are being formed, it is perhaps worth recalling some facts that make Europe Africa's top partner. Beginning with trade, the European Union (EU) accounts for 36% of Africa's trade in goods

(compared to 17% for China and 6% for the US). Europe is by far Africa's biggest investor, now providing €261 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) versus €42 billion for the US and €38 billion for China; and we have long been and still are Africa's biggest donor (€22 billion per year). Added to this is Europe's very substantial support to African efforts in the area of peace and security; and the millions of practical ways that Africans and Europeans are linked together every day. Around 170,000 African students came to Europe in 2019, with 8,500 doing so on EU-funded scholarships.

A partnership fit for purpose in the post-pandemic world

All this is highly relevant and bears repeating; but it is not the essence, which is that we, as the EU, want to revamp our partnership with Africa and make it fit for purpose in the post-pandemic world. Of course, the coronavirus has had major impact on both continents, in terms of health, economy and even security. For the first time in 25 years, we will see the African continent in recession.

We are ready to do our part to address urgent needs and plan together to 'build back better'. This is not just rhetoric. The Team Europe package of EU institution and member state support allocates €8 billion for Africa. There is also the EU's stance in favour of not just a moratorium on debt repayments but also debt relief (unlike others); and the EU's €7.5 billion for development of a vaccine, and our commitment to make sure the vaccine, when it comes, will be treated as a global public good.

Beyond the corona crisis, other reasons why the EU wants to revamp the EU-Africa partnership still apply today, perhaps even more so. The pandemic has acted as an accelerator of world history. There is more geopolitical competition today, and the world is becoming more digital, more authoritarian and with more inequality within and between states. There is also clearer competition between different political and societal models.

In this rougher world, Europeans and Africans have every reason to work together, to protect values and interests that should be dear to both. We share the vision of a society based on individual political rights and freedoms, solidarity, human dignity and the centrality of the Sustainable Development Goals. As partners for multilateralism, we must ensure that the international system itself is based on respect for laws and rules. There are clearly many actors pursuing a different vision and agenda; we see this every day, both in Europe and in Africa.

Shared strategic priorities for a mature political partnership

Which societal vision and which political model will prevail

in the post-corona world is truly a strategic issue and should be at the heart of EU-Africa dialogue at all levels. Which strategic vision is upheld will determine the specific priorities that flow from it. The EU should be clear on what its interests and priorities are, but of course these need to be matched with Africa's. After all, this is what a mature political partnership is about. Obvious shared priorities could include the following:

- **Working jointly on the recovery**, by giving substance to the rhetoric of 'building back better' and above all by prioritising women and the young in everything we do
- **Digitalisation and innovation**, because our future is digital, but we must make the internet accessible to all, while protecting the privacy of each of us
- **Climate change and resilience**, because this is the mega-challenge coming after COVID-19, and we will not find a vaccine against it
- **Peace and security**, by silencing the guns from the Sahel to the Horn and Great Lakes through inclusive peacemaking
- **Partnering at the global level**, because the multilateral system is in crisis, and both sides have a major stake in creating a world where agreed rules, not might, make right

For each of these areas, we must gather the best ideas and learn from past mistakes. We also have to give visibility to our common efforts, so African and European citizens know what is being done in their name.

The bad thing about the future is that it is unknown and full of challenges. The good thing is that we can shape it together. As the post-pandemic world takes shape, Africans and Europeans must decide how they want that world to look, and act accordingly.

About the author

Since December 2019, Josep Borrell has been EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.

He previously served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and has held numerous senior-level positions in both Spanish and European politics and academia.



AU-EU partnership: Goals and expectations

Now at the two decade mark, the AU-EU partnership needs to be strengthened, reinvigorated and focused on delivering concrete results that are tangible for the peoples of Africa, especially its youth and women. The next AU-EU Summit will be an opportunity for AU and EU leaders to reflect on the objectives of the partnership, beyond the rhetoric.

By **Levi Uche Madueke**

A partnership as an instrument of transformation

This year marks 20 years since the formalisation of the partnership between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU). During that two decades, the partnership has matured and withstood numerous challenges. As it forges ahead, it will continue to be tested by issues such as the COVID-19

pandemic and global trends in governance, peace and security, trade, and multilateralism.

These, and the impacts of poverty and inequality within and between countries, also provide opportunities to consolidate and deepen mutual understanding and promote a paradigm shift.

Attainable goals and expectations

Now, in 2020, four priority areas represent the greatest opportunities for increased collaboration and impact of the partnership:

- Peace, security and governance
- Investing in people
- Migration and mobility
- African sustainable structural transformation

African and European leaders have stood hand-in-hand to address *peace, security and governance* challenges as novel and growing global threats emerged. They have dedicated enormous resources and energy to fight violent extremism and terrorism, while supporting preventative diplomacy and peacebuilding.

Through the African Peace Facility, the EU and its member states have been instrumental in supporting various peace programmes on the continent, in line with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). With the launch in 2018, of the revitalised AU Peace Fund, with the EU and the United Nations as Board of Trustees members, AU member states have expressed their commitment to fully contribute their fair share to peace and security operations and to the goal of 'silencing the guns' on the continent, which is the AU's theme for 2020.

Investing in people means putting citizens at the centre of integration and cooperation. This is the key to ensuring the sustainability of any multilateral initiative. In the case of the AU-EU partnership, jobs creation, skills development and participation at all levels of society will be needed to capitalise on Africa's demographic dividend and maximise the contribution of its youth and women to long-term growth. The importance of this was underscored by the theme of the Fifth AU-EU Summit: 'Investing in Youth for a Sustainable Future'. That summit was followed up by concrete joint youth initiatives and the AU's declaration of 2020-2030 as the 'Decade of African Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion'.

The AU-EU partnership has facilitated dialogue towards developing a more nuanced understanding of and durable solutions to challenges related to *migration and mobility*. Africa has adopted a common political framework and a common position on migration and mobility. These continue to provide a roadmap for engagement and cooperation in this area (AU, 2017).

...the AfCFTA will propel growing intra-African trade and enable Africa to trade more effectively with its partners in a more sustainable manner. In this process, it will be vital to strengthen trade and sustainable investment relationships

The unveiling of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has created the world's largest free-trade zone. As a primary vehicle for *African sustainable structural transformation*, the AfCFTA will propel growing intra-African trade and enable Africa to trade more effectively with its partners in a more sustainable manner. In this process, it will be vital to strengthen trade and sustainable investment relationships, to facilitate cross-continental value chains, to utilise tools and technology, and to attract and retain the right skills to support burgeoning industries.

Though these four areas present numerous opportunities, in several other areas further engagement is required to overcome differences and develop consensus. Key among these are mitigating illicit financial flows; application of international criminal justice and the sequencing of peace and justice; cultural relativism in human rights, particularly regarding sexual orientation, and the primacy of the AU and regional economic communities in resolution of conflicts.

To move forward on these critical issues, recognition of different approaches and candid dialogue are needed on both sides.

The way forward

In the wake of COVID-19, *strengthened cooperation, coordination and delivery* are called for to effectively manage the pandemic and facilitate post-pandemic recovery. The effects of the pandemic have left our economies and health care systems extremely fragile and vulnerable. Without proper planning, adequate policy formulation and a robust economic response, the work started on all of our various priorities may ultimately stagnate. Strengthening and delivering on the partnership is therefore that much more critical.

In 2020, the EU committed an initial €10 million towards implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak. The AU, through its Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), is working to strengthen the coordination function of the Africa Taskforce for Novel Coronavirus.

However, further investments are needed to ensure that a vaccine is

widely available, accessible and affordable, and to provide resources, including debt relief packages, for post-pandemic economic recovery and to ramp up surveillance to prevent the spread of other epidemics, or indeed pandemics, in the future.

The *next AU-EU Summit* provides an opportunity to realign the partnership priorities, sustain the strategic direction and identify quick wins. It is in the interest of both continents to welcome a renewed and streamlined partnership, based on joint socio-economic and political development, matched to Africa's regional integration agenda. The AU-EU partnership needs to deliver on its overall vision in a transparent and coherent manner and truly benefit both parties.

Beyond the longstanding AU-EU partnership, the AU has been cementing partnerships with various other regional organisations and countries. Such other efforts are part of a global outreach mounted by a strategic, transformative and sustainable leadership of the AU Commission that remains committed to ensuring attainment of the Africa we want, recognising the need for the world to partner with Africa.

On the global stage, the AU brings the attention of investors to the fullness of what it represents, the opportunities that exist on the continent and its unimaginable endowment.

Concluding thoughts

The AU understands the importance and value of building relationships that provide mutual benefits. Now, more than ever, it engages with different regions, to promote synergies to drive development and integration of the continent.

The AU-EU partnership needs to deliver on its overall vision in a transparent and coherent manner and truly benefit both parties.

To this end, the EU will remain a key AU partner. The importance of the AU-EU partnership cannot be overstated, for good reason, as both share many years – even centuries – of common history. Africa aims to work with the EU to implement the AU's 'Agenda 2063' long-term developmental framework vision and strategy. The EU should aim to work with Africa as a strong ally. The AU-EU partnership therefore needs to be strengthened, reinvigorated and focused on delivering concrete results that are tangible for the peoples of Africa, especially its youth and women. In this regard, the Sixth AU-EU Summit is an opportunity for AU and EU leaders to reflect on the objectives of the partnership, beyond the rhetoric.

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the African Union Commission

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How Europe-Africa relations were liberated from decades-old thinking

The year is 2030. Marta Gabarova, European Commissioner for Africa and member of the African-European Joint Authority speaks frankly about the evolution of the relationship with Africa since the postponed AU-EU Summit in 2020. The radical revision of the partnership towards interest-based cooperation has been a game changer for both continents. It has lifted heavy psychological burdens and the dead weight of 'path dependency'. Both sides can now focus on what genuinely unites them.

By Marta Gabarova

Never waste a good crisis, the saying goes. Inadvertently, this is what happened in Europe-Africa relations during the past ten years.

At first, it all seemed so dramatic. COVID-19 wreaked havoc on a global scale. More than a million dead, societies torn apart and economies shrunk. The pandemic set back years of progress towards the

sustainable development goals. The global pandemic was also blamed for the postponement of the AU-EU Summit meant to take place in October 2020.

A second, more dramatic shock came when the EU, facing a spectacular fiscal squeeze, moved to cut external spending and focus the remaining resources on its neighbouring countries.

Though the European Commission under then President Von der Leyen had grown fond of talking up its geopolitical role, in reality the EU was struggling to make a mark even in its immediate neighbourhood. Conflicts abounded where other actors were setting the pace: Libya, Syria and Turkey, but also Ukraine and Belarus, following the fraudulent elections of August 2020. All these crises meant there were simply too many fires around the EU. The EU's declining resources had to be allocated to the EU's border. Despite attempts to give matters a positive spin, this meant that the funds the EU had for decades devoted to sub-Saharan Africa had to be cut, and dropped from €26 billion to €10 billion. Another €10 billion, originally meant for humanitarian aid, was left untouched, as a mark of the EU's enduring readiness to meet humanitarian crises worldwide.

There was a predictable outcry from some African partners, NGOs and the wider development community. It even led to the resignation of the sitting European Commissioner, Jutta Urpilainen, who openly expressed her disagreement in a debate in the European Parliament (watched by 10 million viewers, another first in the history of EU integration).

The removal of the certainty of large-scale European financial largesse also removed all the psychological baggage that came with it.

But after the dust settled, what had seemed like a short-sighted, self-centred EU decision turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The removal of the certainty of large-scale European financial largesse also removed all the psychological baggage that came with it. Gone were European paternalism and assumptions that the Africa-EU partnership would be built around EU priorities. After all, Europe was paying. Gone too was the resentment on the European side at the lack of African gratitude for its decades-long aid and for Africa's willingness, as some saw it, to cynically side with China and its 'offer' of infrastructure projects without pesky requirements on human rights, transparency and

environmental impact assessments. All that was swept aside.

Africans too were psychologically 'liberated' when they saw that the Europeans could no longer play their usual game of leveraging financial support into policy influence, invariably dressed up as 'cooperation among equals'. Gone was the need to cater to the endless stream of European ideas, plans and visitors – just because they had money to spend. Some young Africans remarked that this was the real end to centuries of European colonialism.

It meant that both sides had to drop decades of path dependencies, tired mental schemes and categories – and go back to first principles: What did both sides want? What interests did they have in common, leading to which concrete objectives? What kind of architecture and policy instruments were needed to achieve these?

In October 2021, a special AU-EU Summit took place and the turnout was impressive. Because the United Nations (UN) General Assembly had still not resumed in 2021, the AU-EU Summit was that year's largest gathering of Heads of State and Government. Its Ljubljana Declaration set out a new way forward for relations between the two continents. The African side had used the extra time well to set political priorities together, using not just diplomatic negotiations but also online crowdsourcing on both continents. Five priority clusters were identified that have guided the relationship ever since:

- Trade/the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) and regional integration
- Climate and resilience
- Peace and security
- Digitalisation and innovation
- Youth and mobility

It was agreed that, from now on, all efforts would go to concrete projects and tangible activities. The main criterion was, 'if you can't see it or touch it, it won't be funded'. All activities had to be branded #AfricaEuropeTogether, and only European or African

organisations working together could be implementers; so no more budget support and no more going through UN agencies. Applying for funds was made easier and bureaucratic hurdles reduced. A co-funding requirement was introduced, so 50% had to be provided by each side. The initial total budget of €20 billion was to be reviewed every year. Overall, this was less than it used to be, but the quality turned out to be higher, with better outcomes, more geared to the future instead of legacy programmes.

The Ljubljana Declaration established a new African-European Joint Authority, with five Commissioners from each side. The Authority meets once a month and oversees the day-to-day running of the partnership. A Partnership Council, made up of 15 leaders from each side, chosen by rotation, meets once a year to provide strategic direction, taking decisions by super-qualified majority voting.

It was agreed that, from now on, all efforts would go to concrete projects and tangible activities. The main criterion was, 'if you can't see it or touch it, it won't be funded'.

There were of course teething problems. But soon enough the new way of working together started to deliver strikingly successful forms of cooperation and results: establishment of an African-European network of universities that funds up to 50,000 exchange programmes each year; an African-European coalition for free distribution of vaccines after the successful alliance for the 2021 COVID-19 one; training 500 joint custom officials on Africa's external borders to police the ACFTA; a joint AU-EU peacekeeping brigade on standby for peacekeeping duties worldwide, not just in Africa; the 'Solar' project on renewables in North and East Africa; the ongoing joint development of a mobile digital payment system for use on both continents. These are just a few examples.

The new form of cooperation also influenced the multilateral arena. In the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization, for example, the AU and EU were able to jointly push through the institutional reforms both had advocated for years, while other major players continued to pursue their narrow national agendas.

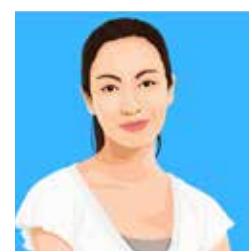
Europeans did have to swallow hard when they saw they had less influence than they wanted. Yet, within the EU, the number of countries taking a serious interest in Africa doubled, as cooperation no longer revolved around those with money and old colonial ties. It is no accident that this author, the first-ever EU Commissioner for Africa, comes from a country that never had any colonies in Africa.

Africans had to come to terms with losing, at last, the ability to play the guilt card. They now had to articulate and agree on truly African priorities, instead of presenting wish-lists of national projects. A few old autocrats had to give up their old game of using European money and control of security services to hang on to power, staving off demands from young Africans for accountability and democratic change. It is still a work in progress, obviously, but now, ten years on, we can conclude that the annus horribilis of 2020 marked a liberation of sorts. It cut Europe and Africa off from the distorting effect of financial inequality and the psychological baggage that comes with it.

In the final analysis, the best form of cooperation among states and groups of states is that grounded on a firm foundation of common interest. That is what European and African leaders pulled out of the rubble of the COVID-19 pandemic. We ought to thank them for it. The only question is, 'what took them so long?'

About the author

Marta Gabarova is the European Commissioner for Africa and member of the African-European Joint Authority.





Africa needs a strategy for Europe

After decades of calls by leading voices from both continents, the relationship between Africa and the European Union (EU) is being reviewed. But for a complete rethinking of the partnership both parties need to clearly define their common interests and strategic priorities.

By **Tighisti Amare**

A widening field

With a growing population and significant economic potential, Africa has become more of a geopolitical focus. The growing competition for influence between the continent's traditional partners and emerging powers, such as China, India, Russia and the Gulf States, has given many governments across Africa increasing agency. But the EU is still the most significant player in Africa, and redefining the strategic priorities for the partnership between the two continents has become ever more important.

In the EU, aspiration and incoherence

To date, the Africa-EU partnership has been shaped by a series of frameworks developed primarily by the

EU. These include the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), which was adopted in Lisbon in 2007, and envisaged as a long-term, continent-to-continent partnership of equals. But the JAES does not work in harmony with other agreements, such as the 2000 Cotonou agreement, which governs EU-Africa trade and is currently being renegotiated; the regional strategies adopted by the EU Council for the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel; and the EU's bilateral trade pact with Africa's economic powerhouse – South Africa. The result has been incoherence.

Moreover, EU member states' interests and priorities, particularly their concerns about security and migration, have brought additional complexity and tension. This

has pushed the relationship further away from a 'partnership of equals'. The EU's piecemeal approach has also contributed to the fragmenting of the continent, dividing African voices and agency, and weakening and slowing of the pace of African integration.

A new EU strategy with Africa

The EU wants to engage differently with Africa. It wants to move away from a donor-recipient dynamic prioritising development, humanitarian and security concerns, towards a more balanced relationship based on trade and investment. An unprecedented series of high-level visits in 2020 has signalled Africa's importance as an EU foreign policy priority. The new President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, chose Addis Ababa as the destination of her first overseas visit outside the EU. Twenty-two of her Commissioners attended the 10th EU-African Union (AU) Commission-to-Commission meeting, while the European Council President, Charles Michel, attended the AU Annual Summit. In addition, several EU member states that have not traditionally prioritised Africa have now developed strategies for engagement with the continent.

In March 2020, the EU released a joint communication titled 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa', offering a basis for the new Africa strategy expected to be agreed at the next AU-EU summit, now postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 crisis. The communication proposes strengthened cooperation between the EU and Africa through collaboration in five areas: green transition and energy access; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; and migration and mobility. It also emphasises African capacity in security and defence, infrastructure development, and regional and continental economic integration.

Though there is no doubt that the proposal underlines the EU's commitment to Africa, responses to it have been mixed. For example, it is unclear how the strategy will fit with the post-Cotonou negotiations or with the new financing mechanism that will replace the European Development Fund (EDF). It has also been criticised as being vague on how to address the migration issue, which has become central to the political debate in several EU member states, and on issues such as the securitisation of development policies and illicit financial flows.

In the AU, ambition without strategy?

The AU, too, wants to institutionalise a partnership with the EU that includes political and trade relations, oriented towards the goals of 'Agenda 2063', the AU's vision for an integrated Africa. This ambition is most visibly embodied in the signing of the agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2018. Creation of the AfCFTA, which is the largest free trade area established since the founding of the World Trade Organization, sends a very important economic and political signal and has given the AU leverage in its political relationships with the continent's international partners. (The EU has faced some criticism that its new strategy is insufficiently aligned with these African aspirations. But the EU's Africa strategies inevitably reflect its own internal priorities).

The AU and its member states need to move beyond following the EU's lead to define their own priorities, including development of a long-term comprehensive strategy for Europe. To date, the AU has not articulated a vision that reflects the continent's expectations for its partnership with the EU. As illustrated with Agenda 2063, the AU does have ambitious goals for the continent, but it is often unclear how these relate to its international relations.

The AU's heavy dependence on EU funding has been a complicating factor here, as it has created an unbalanced, donor-recipient dynamic that has led to tension and deep frustration. But the AU is undergoing a process of institutional reform that includes a roadmap for financial self-sufficiency. If successful, this will lead to less reliance on external funding, in particular from the EU.

Getting the fundamentals right

There is clearly political will on both sides and increased interest in strengthening cooperation and moving the partnership forward. But a mutually beneficial relationship cannot be achieved through good will alone. It requires getting the fundamentals right and for both parties to take an active role in shaping the partnership's strategic priorities.

About the author

Tighisti Amare is Assistant Director of the Africa Programme at Chatham House.



European Investment Bank tackles COVID-19 and climate change with its African partners

The COVID-19 pandemic puts increased strain on the already stretched public and private financing in Africa. The pressure could set back the continent's sustainable development and economic growth by decades, unless there is a major response now.

By Ambroise Fayolle

Commitment to COVID-19 response in Africa

African finance ministers have called on European partners and the international community to support public health and economic resilience, emphasising the need to focus on Africa's private sector.

In April, the European Investment Bank (EIB) promised support totalling €5.2 billion, as part of Team Europe's response to the pandemic beyond Europe's borders. Our commitment to the COVID-19 response in Africa targets both the immediate impacts of the disease and continuation of the long-term investment that

is essential for climate action and sustainable development. Since COVID-19 struck, EIB financial and technical experts in offices across Africa and at our Luxembourg headquarters have worked closely with hundreds of public and private sector partners to identify and respond to the new challenges thrown up by the pandemic.

Coordination has also been a key feature of our action within Team Europe, in particular, with the European Commission and European public banks. Like other multilateral development banks, we joined the G20 Debt Service Suspension

Initiative and committed to provide positive net flows to eligible countries. Here is what we have developed so far.

Scaling up support for public health

We are working with the World Health Organization to strengthen primary health care across Africa. This includes scaling up financing to protect medical supply chains, to improve hygiene and safeguard medical workers, and to reduce the spread of COVID-19, in partnership with the Global Vaccine Alliance, GAVI.

In Senegal, Niger and Malawi, in the countries around Lake Victoria, and

elsewhere in Africa, we are working with UN-Habitat and European partners to help local authorities improve hygiene. This is an essential part of large-scale water projects, and is crucial in managing the pandemic.

In Morocco, we are helping transform medical care at 16 hospitals and improving the supply of medical equipment for public health efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Strengthening economic resilience across Africa

The EIB has already launched fast-track regional financing initiatives to increase public health investment and support new private sector lending through hundreds of local financial institutions.

This financing will ensure that entrepreneurs, smallholders and businesses across Africa can continue to access finance, including local currency and working capital, even in the face of shuttered export markets, reduced demand and continued uncertainty.

New, targeted private sector financing is being rolled out across Africa, following agreement on the first national programme in Senegal and a pan-African programme with Afreximbank.

These new programmes build on ongoing investment with experienced African financial

institutions already delivering hundreds of small-scale clean energy, digital, education, health and micro-finance schemes across the continent.

Building on our track record of support for mobile banking, telecommunications and connectivity across Africa, the EIB and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have brought together policymakers and business leaders from across the continent to share experiences with proven digital solutions that can help combat COVID-19 and strengthen economic resilience.

Ensuring that global financial and technical expertise benefits Africa

In 2019, the EIB provided more than €1.8 billion to support private sector investment across Africa, representing 60% of its overall engagement on the continent. This included €500 million of new dedicated support for African start-up companies' initiatives in digital, agribusiness, financial inclusion and health services.

Across Africa we ensure that technical, environmental, social and financial expertise and sector understanding is shared with project promoters, financial partners and the private sector.

Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, we completed training programmes for more than 4,000 African financial professionals in best banking practice, climate risk and sustainable finance skills. These will contribute to improve local financial markets and increase African banks' contribution to long-term development.

In Uganda, the country that hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa,

we partnered with the UN Refugee Agency to provide a two-week training programme for refugees and host communities to improve financial inclusion and financial literacy. By helping entrepreneurs expand business activity, the Ugandan programme will reduce unemployment in rural communities and improve access to loans for refugees and host communities.

Continuing climate and gender action in Africa

The EIB's unique technical and financial expertise in supporting climate action and renewable energy is transforming access to clean energy, sustainable transport and reliable water supply across Africa. This helps protect vulnerable smallholders from droughts and floods.

Through high-impact financing, sharing technical best practice with local banks and blending our loans with EU grants, we help put public transport alternatives on the congested roads of Cairo, Rabat and Dakar. With the same tools we are providing clean water for the first time to millions of residents of Ouagadougou, Bamako and Niamey and enabling villagers in remote communities across Mozambique and Uganda to access solar power through off-grid technology. Work on the ground is well underway on all these projects.

We are working with ongoing projects to better protect coastal roads in the island nation of São Tomé and to secure clean water supply for 2.2 million people in Madagascar's capital, following recent typhoons.

Last year, our SHEInvest initiative started unlocking €1 billion of new investment to boost gender equality



Ambroise Fayolle and Minister of Finance Richard Randriamandrato signing a €35 million loan to the Republic of Madagascar.
Photo: ©Cyrille Lachèvre/EIB

and female economic empowerment. The aim is for millions of women entrepreneurs across Africa to have better access to finance – as well as to ensure that new climate, digital, water, energy and transport projects increase women's economic participation.

Helping vulnerable communities, prioritising investment in fragile states

In recent years, we provided more than €2 billion in new financing to support high-impact investment in fragile states and least-developed countries in Africa.

Last year the EIB agreed to provide first-time telecommunications coverage for remote rural regions in West Africa and to ensure that rural regions of the Sahel can access microfinance.

We recently agreed to help pave the Mano River Union Road in Liberia. This will reduce seasonal closures

after heavy rains and give more people access to markets and health care. It will also strengthen trade links between northern Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

We are pioneering a new, innovative climate insurance scheme for smallholders, to strengthen the economic resilience of rural communities and local financial institutions in sub-Saharan Africa. Such insurance will help smallholders access finance to expand their activities and invest in new equipment, livestock and materials, as droughts and floods pose an ever-present risk.

Committed to supporting transformational investment in Africa

Africa is a key priority for the European Union (EU) and the EIB. Last year, the EIB provided €3 billion in new financing to support €10.7 billion in transformational investment across Africa. This builds

on our 58 years of engagement across 52 African countries.

The EIB remains committed to working with African partners to respond to COVID-19 and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As the EU Bank, we are also determined to be a key partner in implementing the ambitions of the next EU budget. We will continue to accelerate investment that delivers sustainable development, tackles the climate emergency, creates jobs and improves lives across Africa.

About the author

Ambroise Fayolle is Vice President of the European Investment Bank and member of the EIB Management Committee responsible for Africa, development and innovation.





Using the AU-EU partnership to make strides towards a more circular economy on both continents

The circular economy is more than just a pipe dream. It is an essential element of job creation and low-emissions, climate resilient and sustainable development. Intensifying cooperation between African and European actors has great potential to contribute to the circular economy transition.

By **Jeske van Seters**

Turning the tide together

The joint declaration of the last African Union (AU) - European Union (EU) summit in 2017 was clear: leaders on both continents pronounced their commitment to jointly promote responsible and sustainable allocation of public and private capital to the transition to a circular economy. Indeed, the circular economy is considered to have high potential for job creation and low-emissions, climate resilient and sustainable development.

Now, almost three years down the line, the rationale for collaboration in this space has not disappeared. On the contrary, despite the many encouraging initiatives we still live in a world that is only 8.6% circular – and even that marks a deterioration from 2018, when circularity was estimated at 9.1%. Though the widening global ‘circularity gap’ predates the corona crisis, its message is unambiguous: there is work to be done. Food and plastic waste, for example, is still a major concern on both sides of the Mediterranean. Further efforts are needed for the transition

to a circular economy, including in the global value chains that connect Africa and the European Union (EU). This means designing waste and pollution out of our economic system, keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible and regenerating natural systems to stay within the boundaries of our planet while satisfying societies’ basic needs.

Intensifying cooperation between the EU and the AU and between the members of both regional communities for more circularity is fully in line with the EU’s Green Deal, its Farm to Fork Strategy and its Circular Economy Action Plan. The Action Plan is quite specific in aspiring for “a stronger partnership with Africa to maximise the benefits of the green transition and the economic opportunities in the circular economy”. It can be no surprise then, that the circular economy is prominent in the EU’s vision for the future Africa-EU partnership, published in March 2020 in preparation for the next AU-EU Summit, now set for 2021, COVID-19 permitting.

While the African side has been less vocal about the centrality of the circular economy in Africa-EU cooperation, it fits with the circular economy paths that various African countries have embarked, such as Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. To take the example of South Africa, the government has the ambition to position the country as a significant actor in the green growth and green development space. South African actors, including those in the business world, increasingly recognise that applying circular economy principles can generate income and create jobs. South Africa's new National Waste Management Strategy is one of the recent policy initiatives to create a more enabling environment and incentivise a shift towards a circular economy. The strategy encompasses the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) approach, with its 'the polluter pays' ethos. This may sound familiar to Europeans, as the EU, too, increasingly uses EPR mechanisms.

Let's not be naïve

But let's not be naïve. Circularity is not only a much-needed blessing for the environment, and an opportunity for job creation and economic growth. It brings challenges as well. Reduced demand for raw materials, for example, has implications for commodity-dependent countries. It will require diversification of these countries' export baskets. Furthermore, companies will need to comply with increasingly stringent circular economy-related standards. That means public and private circularity-related standards in the EU may present a barrier to trade for African companies if they have trouble meeting the requirements. The flipside of the coin is the incentive and opportunity for African companies to produce more sustainably in response to those circular economy-related standards and to seize market opportunities of more circular business models.

But let's not be naïve. Circularity is not only a much-needed blessing for the environment, and an opportunity for job creation and economic growth.

Efforts will be needed to leverage the opportunities and address the challenges brought by the circular economy. Dialogue and collaboration between African and European actors from the private and public sector can play a large role in delivering the potential mutual benefits.

Dialogue and collaboration between South Africa and the EU

Let's get back to South Africa and its trade and investment relations with the EU. This case reveals some interesting and diverse examples of more circular approaches involving actors from the private sector:

- The company PalletPlast has initiated production of lightweight plastic pallets made of recycled PET bottles using equipment from Portugal and Germany among others; the pallets are suitable for transporting certain fruits, including to the EU.
- The N1 mall in Cape Town uses a modular system that transforms organic food waste into energy and fertiliser, developed by the Dutch company Waste Transformers.
- South Africa's MakerSpace Foundation, in collaboration with the French company Veolia, has created a networking space in Durban, called Baobab, to raise awareness and provide educational programmes related to the green economy.

The government of South Africa, the representation of the EU and member states' embassies in the country have also chipped in. For example, through the EU-South Africa Dialogue Facility, a study tour to the EU has been organised to allow South Africans and Europeans to engage and share ideas on approaches to reduce food waste, and research has been done to better understand food waste in South Africa. These activities contributed to the recent adoption of the Voluntary Agreement on Food Loss and Waste by South African food manufacturers, suppliers and retailers, led by the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa. Another example is the recent virtual circular economy event, part of the Team Europe Climate Diplomacy Week, for exchanges between South African and European actors on circular economy principles and approaches in a variety of sectors. Finally, an example of direct funding is the Finnish Fund for Local Cooperation in South Africa, which recently called for circular economy-related proposals from businesses, cooperatives, chambers of commerce and NGOs, among others.

Going above and beyond

Collaboration between South Africa and the EU for a transition to a circular economy can be accelerated and also provide inspiration to move the AU-EU partnership to a higher level on this topic. While we cannot expect miracles from a summit, the upcoming AU-EU Summit presents a clear opportunity in this regard. Ambitions should go beyond mere words stating that countries will cooperate for a transition to a circular economy, to include specific and committal language. Not least, this could relate to the AU-EU Summit's expected emphasis on measures to strengthen investment and trade relations. Let's make sure that these measures can and do contribute to a transition to a circular economy on both continents!

About the author

Jeske van Seters is Head of the Private Sector Engagement Programme at ECDPM.





Mayors on migration: 'Change the narrative by changing realities on the ground'

Freetown's Mayor, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, and the Mayor of Milan, Giuseppe Sala, both co-conveners of the Mayors Dialogue on Growth and Solidarity, discuss human mobility and the future of cities with ECDPM's Amanda Bisong.

Amanda Bisong (AB): *What is your role in the Mayors Dialogue on Growth and Solidarity, and how did it come about?*

Freetown Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr:

I'm proud to lead the Mayors Dialogue on Growth and Solidarity, alongside Giuseppe Sala, Mayor of Milan. We created this initiative to bring other mayors on board to show that partnership between cities can contribute to solutions and a more positive dialogue on migration, that benefits cities and their residents. In talks on migration, the European side always seems to take a defensive position from large arrivals of

migrants from Africa. We mayors recognise that the story can and should be different. The experience at the city level is different from what is portrayed nationally.

As an African mayor I worry about the young people who migrate from my shores. How will they be received abroad? Every young person who leaves my city to find a better life represents an added burden on my city's ability to grow and develop - the migrants that Europe views as a burden are a loss to us. We have to recognise that the challenge of migration is also felt by the places losing their bright and young. The

Mayors Dialogue is committed to finding alternatives for young people, as migration should be a choice made for mutual benefit.

Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala: I met Mayor Aki-Sawyerr of Freetown on the Leadership Board of the Mayors Migration Council (MMC). The MMC is an organisation we both founded along with other global mayors - from Los Angeles and Sao Paulo to Amman and Kampala - to help cities influence national and international policy on migration and ensure that global responses reflect and address realities

on the ground. Despite the differences in our respective situations, in Freetown and Milan we share the same aspiration: to make our cities places of opportunity, where the youth thrive, where mobility is a choice and newcomers can find a home. We resolved to work together to rally mayors from both continents to jointly reimagine Africa-Europe relations from the bottom up, developing a shared vision based on concrete action and innovation in cities and through city-to-city cooperation. This has become all the more pressing in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which forces us to rethink models for urban development and create a 'new normal'.

For Milan, engagement in the Mayors Dialogue builds on a long tradition of cooperation between European and African cities. We have a decades-long sistership with Dakar, and bilateral or multilateral relations with Maputo, Ouagadougou, Quelimane, Tunis and several others, including other Italian cities. We also work with the African diaspora in Milan to support the establishment of businesses in countries of origin. The European Commission is a close partner in some of these cooperation projects, and was an early supporter of the Mayors Dialogue. We are also engaging with European and African institutions and governments to ensure that the Africa-EU partnership recognises cities as essential partners.

AB: What do you see as the biggest challenges when it comes to cooperation between Africa and Europe on migration? How is your city affected?

Mayor of Milan: Fundamentally, human mobility is about connecting people. Yet, the movement of people from Africa to Europe has become an incredibly charged and contentious topic – not least due to disagreements within Europe on migration. Italy is on the frontline of irregular migration from Africa. Italian cities were among the first to manage migrant reception and needs. Milan, at the crossroad of European trajectories, has been key in assisting those granted



international protection. This has raised countless issues locally.

But there are also a number challenges in terms of cooperation:

- Supporting African cities of arrival. Cities in Africa are under tremendous pressure to meet the aspirations of their rapidly growing populations, especially young people, with limited means.
- Easing legal movements between Africa and Europe. Decisions to move should be based on choices and options – for study, work, family or humanitarian reasons. The same applies to decisions to stay and commit to a place and community.
- Making human mobility better. In Milan we strive to be a welcoming city. For example, for those who come to Milan through family reunification

– several thousand people a year – we provide advance information on schools, employment and health. We support recipient families and provide opportunities for Italian language classes in the country of origin.

- Unlocking blockages among EU member states. Deeper cooperation in Europe is needed to support migrants who are in limbo and address the challenge of family separations.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of all is the political one: to counter a zero-sum politics of fear that pitches 'us' against 'them'. We need a politics of solidarity, within and across our cities and societies. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown the deep inequalities in our midst, but also that our collective resilience depends on protecting everyone. This is not the last crisis we will face. We must make the recovery from Covid-19 about tackling the climate crisis. If we do not act, African countries, cities and

people that have contributed little to the problem will be particularly hard hit.

Mayor of Freetown: When I look at the situation, I wonder what options young people have in my city. Freetown has 20% of Sierra Leone's population, but less than 0.01% of the land area. And there is still a high rate of migration from rural areas to Freetown. The 74 informal settlements around the city are a breeding ground for hopelessness. That makes young people easy pickings for predators, luring them to a 'Temple Run' migration via irregular channels. Many young people don't make it back. They don't make it anywhere, but lose their lives instead. Those lost lives are a loss to us as a nation.

This bleak outlook is a result of both internal and external factors. These include mismanagement by successive governments, unequal access to trade opportunities and the impacts of the war. There is brain drain, with its impacts on academia, civil service and public service delivery. Climate change is another factor, since extreme weather drives rural-to-urban migration.

Even more, the selective migration policies of destination countries makes it difficult for young people to move and creates different outcomes for migrants. For example, health care workers and other highly skilled migrants are better treated, with facilitated visa access. Yet to develop, my city needs those workers, and low-skilled workers too.

Equally important is to unpack the word 'migrant' and what it means for workers, and their families, and for other people who choose to move. We need to call out what is clearly a bias and the unfair advantage being taken not only of the people, but also the places they come from. As African cities, we are carrying the burden of losing our best!

But I also want to offer hope and opportunities for the young people in my city. Beyond dealing with these issues at the national level, through the Mayors

Dialogue are linking with other cities for innovative solutions that bring hope and opportunities, to foster innovation and to create regular migration pathways for people to move safely. We are going beyond the one-sided discourse about how the Global North only receives, towards a more comprehensive dialogue about how the Global South can address some of the drivers of migration.

AB: What concrete steps has your city taken city to address the challenges?

Mayor of Freetown: Historically, cities have grown and thrived by attracting people, capital and skills, talents, access to markets, literature, and architecture. We believe that each individual has the right to pursue happiness, and that sense of achievement is one that can be gained at home. In Freetown, we are partnering with numerous organisations to create opportunities and jobs, for example, responding to climate change. Jobsearch and the Africa Platform are launching an adult literacy programme in Freetown. We are also partnering with cities like Milan as part of the Mayors Dialogue.

We want to give space and hope to young people in cities, to create an alternative through industry development partnerships.

Mayor of Milan: There is no question that Milan benefits from human mobility – from the international students that bring dynamism to our universities, to the migrant farm workers who secure our food supply and have done so throughout the pandemic. It is also true that we face challenges. In particular, when people lack secure legal status or are seeking to move

elsewhere in Europe and thus are here but do not wish to integrate locally. Milan has developed a strong inter-agency response to ensure accommodation and care for unaccompanied minors. We offer services to help migrants access and complete their education and to enter the labour market. We provide legal assistance on matters of international protection and legal status. And, we are working with other cities in Europe to address shared challenges, such as family reunification, the inclusion of undocumented migrants, and countering sexual and gender-based violence in immigrant communities.

Through the Mayors Dialogue, we are working with Freetown on a new partnership focusing on the fashion industry. The aim is to expand the Sierra Leonean fashion and textiles industry by boosting the capacity of women entrepreneurs and opening export markets for their products. At the same time, the partnership provides an opportunity for the fashion industry in Milan to learn about sustainable and ethical sourcing options in Sierra Leone and to explore the West African market. The project involves academic and industry partners on both sides. One aspect is the possibility for women and young people from Freetown to move to Milan for training and skills development. We are already facilitating circular skill mobility through the MENTOR programme, involving Milan, Turin, Tunis and several Moroccan cities. Through the Mayors Dialogue more collaborations can be seeded and, in partnership with businesses, training institutions and government, scaled up.

AB: How can we get to a more positive and sustainable narrative around migration cooperation between Africa and Europe?

Mayor of Milan: The Mayors Dialogue seeks to change the narrative by changing realities on the ground. A lot of the concern about human mobility centres on governments' fear of losing control. Mayors can restore trust in the ability of government to address migration and the forces that drive it. This is fundamentally

about delivering action for the people at the city level. By showing that local inclusion works, we can take pressure off national policymakers and inspire new approaches to policies on migration.

We can also change the realities of cooperation. As mayors, we meet at eye level; coming together to jointly identify priorities, develop collaborations and mobilise support. The Mayors Dialogue engages others from the outset, including national governments and development agencies, the African and European Union Commissions, international organisations, civil society, businesses, academia and private philanthropy. We aim to galvanise a coalition of allies and champions supporting our vision, and we are ready to provide practical assistance in the form of resources, technical know-how and capacity development.

Mayor of Freetown: Through the Mayors Dialogue are highlighting the positive contributions migrants make for all. We focus on creating economic opportunities, skills partnerships, and engagement and recognition of diaspora and communities on both continents.

We want to give space and hope to young people in cities, to create an alternative through industry development partnerships. These partnerships can open new markets and establish sustainable supply chains and trade relationships between African and European cities. We are also working on skills partnerships in targeted sectors, as a means of reducing irregular migration. Having these partnerships between cities in Africa and Europe gives young people opportunities to engage in training programmes abroad and then return with skills to contribute to building their cities further.

Local inclusion and participation is another area where we want to role model innovation, particularly with sector-based partnerships. In Freetown we are focusing on improved public

service delivery in sanitation and the environment. As mayors, we have to ask ourselves, how can we get sector partnerships thinking outside the box. Let's look at successes, and see where partnerships can lead to mutually beneficial solutions for African and European cities.

Finally, we are promoting recognition and engagement of the diaspora and communities in Africa and in Europe. How can we recognise these communities and develop common standards for the inclusion of all migrants?

AB: What role can mayors play – through the Mayors Dialogue – to improve Africa-Europe cooperation beyond migration?

Mayor of Milan: Migration is not an isolated issue. It is linked to the whole gamut of urban development challenges: from housing and public transport to jobs and social services. That is why we have adopted the motto 'Growth and Solidarity' for the Mayors Dialogue – to signal that solutions for human mobility will come from policy domains other than migration policy. The Mayors Dialogue will develop a joint action agenda rooted in the priorities of cities on both continents. Mayors are strongly committed to delivering on internationally agreed goals, such as those in the Paris Agreement, the SDGs and the Global Compact for Migration. Cities on both continents recognise that we need to bring the quest for growth and prosperity together with the commitment to respect our planet's boundaries and to 'leave no one behind'.

The Mayors Dialogue can help chart a path forward by highlighting and testing innovations for inclusive local governance and participation, access to basic services for all, the transition to a green economy, and fairer, more equitable trade, mobility and diplomatic relations between Africa and Europe.

Exercising solidarity is about establishing a new 'us'. This new 'us' must be steadily built. Solidarity rests on relationships - it requires intention and commitment, and a willingness to change and even sacrifice. It needs, but ultimately must go beyond, political leadership, to find practical expression in the everyday actions and exchanges of people in Africa and Europe.

Mayor of Freetown: Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of the 'leave no one behind' principle. The pandemic has revealed the interconnectedness between host populations and migrants. It has shown that migrants are integrated in society and they contribute to society. Covid-19 death rates among migrant populations have been higher everywhere, because migrants are on the front lines in service delivery jobs. The pandemic has also revealed that migrants are easily subject to victimisation and xenophobia - in the crisis, they have been a buffer between society and the disease. Covid-19 has drawn us together. There is more intense knowledge sharing, experience sharing and encouragement among mayors. Initiatives like the Mayors Dialogue offer a way for cities to engage with each other on Covid-19 measures.

Moving forward, we need to strengthen our city governance capacities. We need to work together to build an integrated approach to urban development that creates cities that young people want to call home, that give hope for a better future and a better tomorrow. We can do this by aligning the Mayors Dialogue with other global initiatives on climate, migration and other priority areas.

We want to promote the joint facilitation of managed mobility – family reunification, resettlement and return – between cities. This is really bold. How do we provide a bridge that allows people to walk back from migration? That is important, because people are often trapped. We have to create a pathway for them.



John Kariuki at one of the Slow Food projects.
Photo supplied by author

Pandemic brings urgency to transform the world's food system now

Africa has not been spared by the COVID-19 emergency. Beyond the immediate health effects, the pandemic threatens the world's already fragile food system, with particularly severe consequences in Africa. The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity believes that the solution lies in small-scale food producers and farmer-managed seed systems.

By John Kariuki Mwangi

A broken food system

Africa is facing diverse conflicts, climate change, the biggest locust invasion in 70 years, and food and nutrition insecurity – in addition to COVID-19. The 2019 United Nations report, 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World', provides key figures on the number of people suffering from hunger, as well as the rate of child stunting and wasting, and adult and child obesity. Worldwide, more than 820 million people still go to bed hungry, and more

than 2 billion lack regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the world's hungry live in sub-Saharan Africa. It is so unfortunate that we live in a global society full of injustices, with hunger and obesity being two sides of today's broken global food system.

A worsening food and hunger crisis

The pandemic has worsened the food and hunger crisis, and devastated the

livelihoods of millions of Africans. It has also raised the alarm on the urgency of transforming the world's food system. The strict health measures imposed to control the pandemic, with lockdowns, job losses and reduced mobility of food products, have led to a serious food crisis in Africa, especially in urban areas. In countries like Uganda and Nigeria, prices of basic foodstuffs escalated to a record high as a result of speculation. This has meant that the majority of those who live from hand

to mouth, with unstable incomes, have missed out even on the food that was available. Inability to meet daily dietary needs compromises people's immune systems, weakening whole communities' abilities to fight COVID-19.

In developed countries, e-commerce and large grocers have played a significant role in providing relief. However, the same cannot be said for sub-Saharan Africa. The retail sector here is almost entirely 'informal' and operated through small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Moreover, sub-Saharan Africa's population is mostly rural.

Detrimental changes, guised as support

In response to these challenges, and to address the constraints that have too long faced agriculture on the continent, multinationals have stepped forward with several mitigation and adaptation measures. Some of these have been offered under a guise of support for African small-scale farmers, purporting to help them become more resilient and provide insurance against hunger and the worsening situation.

An example is the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA), funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation and the Howard G. Buffett foundation. This partnership was introduced with the aim of developing conventional, genetically modified (GM), drought-tolerant and insect protected maize varieties for Africa. Yet, some of the varieties donated to some African countries under the partnership have failed worldwide and are being phased out. This means that a model of agriculture is being promoted that could well confront small-scale farmers with big challenges, particularly a greater need for costly inputs and related biosafety concerns.

Africa should not be treated as a guinea pig for technological trials

or as a dumping site for unwanted technologies. Slow Food is against the tendency towards corporate control of the African food system. Multinational corporations, supported by foreign investors and developed countries are becoming very powerful and have started controlling the African food system at the expense of the food communities and small-scale farmers. As a result of their interventions in some countries, small scale farmers, pastoral and indigenous communities have lost their land to industrial agriculture that supports the use of agrochemicals and monoculture. This has resulted in biodiversity losses and environmental degradation. Some of these countries include: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Benin, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal.

It is no longer business as usual, and much needs to be done. The pandemic has brought increased uncertainty in the global geopolitical environment and exposed fragilities in the current systems and structures.

Europe's food and agricultural policies have a lot of influence and impact, both within and beyond Europe. The planned summit between the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU) can play a significant role in promoting an inclusive, just and sustainable food system in the Global South.

A role for EU policy and the AU-EU Summit

EU strategies and policies should seek to address the challenges facing small-scale farmers on the African continent. In sub-Saharan Africa, small-scale farming employs more than 60% of the workforce and contributes an average 23% of the region's GDP. However, most small-scale farmers are 'poor kings', meaning that they live lives of abject poverty, while producing most of the food eaten.

Free trade agreements tend to be skewed in favour of standardised and industrial models of production. This severely impacts small-scale farmers by discouraging local production and consumption. Agri-food exports from the EU such as poultry and dairy products have continued to flood African markets, confronting small-scale farmers and SMEs with a lot of unfair competition. The AU-EU Summit next year should ensure that exports and imports do not negatively impact food producers and SMEs on either continent. Policies should also aim to support domestic food production to feed Africa's growing population – and not for export markets.

The effects of climate change

Climate change is firmly embedded in the public discourse and has attracted a lot of global attention. What many do not sufficiently realise is that most disasters related to this phenomenon take place in developing countries, especially Africa – though Africa produces the least amount of greenhouse gases. Climate change-related disasters affect Africans so severely because of their dependence on natural resources for their livelihoods and their limited capacity to cope with weather and climate variability and extremes. Swings in weather patterns hit farmers, pastoralists and indigenous communities especially hard, increasing poverty and food insecurity.

Europe's agriculture and food industry has focused mainly on expanding trade volumes and making agribusinesses competitive at the global level. Yet, as a strategic partner for Africa, EU investment needs to support shorter supply chains, localised food systems and farmers markets, which would also reduce carbon footprints. EU development cooperation should emphasise research on climate change and its impacts in Africa, while supporting adaptation and mitigation strategies. Local communities need to be consciously involved in decision-making processes and in policy formulation, especially where natural resources management, agricultural production and trade are concerned.

Youth is the future

Young people are drivers of change on the African continent. However, we have continued to talk about the youth as if they are peripheral. They are not peripheral, but the majority. Their world may be slightly different from ours, but it is real. The AU-EU Summit should produce services and platforms that work for them, because they will be at the centre of transformation. Investing in the youth will reduce migration to developed countries in search of greener pastures. In addition, the AU-EU Summit should bring us policies to ensure that young Africans have equal rights with their EU counterparts, especially the right to travel. The role African immigrants play in the European agriculture and food industry cannot be overstated.

Empowering women

Empowering women is vital to uplift communities out of poverty and ensure food and nutrition security at the household level. In most African countries, women produce 60-80% of food. However, their role is still largely disregarded, and women continue to have limited control over finances and other resources. The AU-EU Summit must mainstream gender concerns in the design of food, agriculture and environmental programmes. Targeted support should be given to smallholder

women farmers, including strategies to facilitate their access to credit.

Protecting African biodiversity

Africa's rich agricultural biodiversity is at risk. The global push by private seed companies to control the entire seed market by promoting a few select crops with the use of improved seeds, GM and hybrids poses a threat to Africa's food sovereignty. Strategies need to be put in place to protect Africa's biodiversity resources. In addition, the AU-EU Summit should come up with policies that guarantee the right to land for farmers and indigenous communities.

The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity

At the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, we believe the real solution to the challenges facing the global food system is not industrial agriculture. The real solution lies in small-scale food producers – custodians of indigenous knowledge – and farmer-managed seed systems. The Foundation has been at the forefront in promoting an agricultural system that respects the environment, animal welfare and human health.

We started working in Africa in 2004 and have since implemented a range of projects. The Ark of Taste and Presidia projects, for example, are cataloguing and protecting biodiversity resources at risk of disappearing. The Earth Markets and Chefs' Alliance have forged direct links between food producers, consumers and chefs, while inviting them to take action to improve the food industry, which contributes 22% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The Slow Food flagship project of 10,000 gardens in Africa plays a substantial role in mitigating the impacts of climate change by enhancing agroecology, fostering adaptive measures and promoting resilient crops.

Urgent action at all levels

The EU- AU Summit can provide a platform for cooperation between European and African organisations, aimed at forging

alliances, networking and awareness raising campaigns targeting consumers in both continents. These alliances will play a fundamental role in ensuring that our production systems are free from human rights violations, respect the environment, animal welfare and human health. Our combined efforts can foster global cooperation, awareness and grassroots interventions for a more sustainable future. Beyond that, immediate action is needed to ensure that all players in the food system, so essential in safeguarding our future and our planet, preserve enough economic strength to overcome the current crisis.

The COVID-19 emergency confronts us with stark evidence that our model of infinite development, indifferent to cultural, social and environmental values, is not sustainable. The AU-EU Summit must act with urgency, exploring ways to adapt trade agreements and policies to facilitate a transition towards agroecology, biodiversity conservation and a more sustainable global food system. Part of this will be to support local supply chains, upheld as a source of dignity and pride for farmers, and to prevent actions that undermine actors in Africa's local food chains.

About the author

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COVID-19 reaffirms the importance of good governance and effective states in Africa

As the primary bearer of the responsibility to govern, states are required to provide political, social and economic goods and services to their people. Lessons emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa demonstrate that without capable, accountable, inclusive and participatory governments, effectively addressing contemporary and emerging challenges such as pandemics will remain a pipe dream.

By [George Mukundi Wachira](#)

Since March 2020, when African states started reporting COVID-19 cases, critical governance concerns began to rise. One issue is how to strike the right balance between upholding democratic governance, respect for human rights and effectively addressing the spread and impact of COVID-19.

Due to weak state capacities, accountability challenges and constrained state-society relations in some African states, there were fears that COVID-19 would have especially pronounced and devastating effects on the continent. While the impact of COVID-19 in Africa has not been greater than in the rest of the world, the pandemic's vast political and socio-economic impact has brought to the fore the critical role of the state, especially in effective management of crises, disasters and public health emergencies.

Role of the state in governance in Africa

As primary bearers of the responsibility to govern, states are required to provide political, social and economic goods and services to their people. In times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, this responsibility is accentuated, because people's livelihoods are interrupted and citizens must rely mainly on the state to cushion them against devastating effects. States are expected to take necessary measures to arrest the impact of a crisis and ensure effective service delivery, while at the same time maintaining good state-society relations. To be effective, states need to uphold the rule of law, respect fundamental human rights and freedoms, be accountable and ensure inclusive and participatory democratic governance.

Governance deficit

While some countries, such as Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, adopted restrictive measures like curfews and lockdowns, others such as Tanzania and Zambia, opted for partial restrictions and remained largely open. Faced with attendant socio-economic costs, many began easing lockdowns and cautiously reopening their economies. In states such as Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa, the pandemic has revealed an underbelly of governance deficits, illustrated by allegations of rampant theft of COVID-19 funds and resources, violation of human rights and impunity of security forces deployed ostensibly to keep the peace and maintain law and order (APRM 2020).

To address these governance deficits, both during the COVID-19 crisis and in the post-pandemic recovery period, African states, in line with their obligations under international human rights law, should commit to upholding the rule of law, accountability, democratic processes and good governance. The effectiveness of governments in responding to the challenges posed by the pandemic will depend on their respect for human rights, transparency, accountability and civic engagement, which can be facilitated by technology, innovation and digital governance.

State-society relations

COVID-19 has illuminated the importance of state-society relations and the need for trust between citizens and their government. The extent to which government directives are adhered to depends on the extent that society and the population (i) believe and trust their government, (ii) participate and feel included in their government's decision-making processes and (iii) feel there is fair and just accountability for transgressors, irrespective of their socio-economic and political status.

In a preliminary report on Africa's governance response to the COVID-19 crisis, the African Peer Review Mechanism observed that most citizens of African states did not consider the quarantine and lockdown measures to be legitimate (APRM 2020). Yet, to be effective and resonate with beneficiaries, governance measures must be trusted and inclusive, and have empathy for those who are governed. African states should therefore guard against imposing measures that undermine democratic processes in the short and long term and impair trust between them and their people.

Capacity of the state in service delivery

COVID-19 has also highlighted capacity constraints in the delivery of essential public goods and services. The virus has adversely affected infrastructure, security, public order, health, social protection and assistance, education, housing, labour, and indeed every element of societal well-being. The pandemic has impacted people's livelihoods, as resources are diverted to address the spread of the virus. Tremendous economic downturns and

job losses have exacerbated inequalities. Education and much needed skills training have been deferred in most countries. The resulting skills gaps, capacity deficits and lost jobs and economic opportunities will require that states be creative in governance in the future (Jayaram et al. 2020). Importantly, states will have to rely more on technology, innovation and digital governance to render public services and goods. To do so, states in collaboration with the private sector and international development partners, should put in place measures to ensure that the digital divide is addressed.

Role of the African Union in supporting member states in governance

COVID-19 has equally reaffirmed that states cannot govern effectively and deliver for their citizens on their own. The cross-border nature of the issues affecting citizens requires a regional approach and strategies to address contemporary global challenges effectively. The resources required to deliver services, prevent pandemics and build lasting capacities are best mobilised through partnerships and regional frameworks.

Africa's 'Agenda 2063' underscores the need for African solutions to regional challenges. During COVID-19, the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention spearheaded continental efforts to deal with the virus. Mobilisation of resources, including distribution of needed technologies and personal protective equipment across the continent, showed the significant potential of regional governance. However, in most countries the socio-economic cost of the virus has diminished national reserves and GDPs. This has limited access to credit and heightened calls for regional approaches to enhance fiscal space, including domestic resource mobilisation (DRM), debt relief and the stemming of illicit financial flows. In the post-pandemic recovery period, the AU through its Advisory Board on Corruption, and in collaboration with the private sector, civil society and relevant international actors, will need to support member states to address these challenges and to adopt and implement effective DRM mechanisms.

With a focus on regional integration, the AU can play an important role in enhancing member states' efforts to address the ramifications of COVID-19. Using its convening power and political leverage, the AU can help its member states put in place foundations for a robust post-pandemic recovery, both short term and long term. This should include support for strengthening the social contract between states and their people, supporting states in protecting the livelihoods of vulnerable and marginalised groups, supporting initiatives to strengthen democratic governance, and establishment of strong institutions that respect the rule of law and human rights.

In particular, the AU needs to develop a robust continental framework for disaster preparedness and management and urge its member states to adopt and implement it. Importantly, the

AU should encourage its members to ratify and domestically apply the Africa Risk Capacity (ARC) treaty.

Global partnerships and collaboration

COVID-19 has reaffirmed the need for global partnerships and collaboration to prevent, mitigate and resolve global threats to humanity, such as pandemics, climate change, conflict and insecurity (World Bank 2020). The role played by global entities including the United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU) and bilateral actors such as China, Russia and the United States, have profound impact on global governance, though they may also compound global challenges. As such, global partnerships and collaborations as envisioned in Sustainable Development Goal 17, such as the upcoming AU-EU Partnership Strategy, remain invaluable in strengthening the role of the state in governance and in the fight against the spread and impact of COVID-19.

Global solidarity and cooperation are critical, considering that no single country is capable of preventing or fully controlling the COVID-19 pandemic on its own. Therefore, there is a need to collaborate and build global synergies to address the impact of the virus. Collaboration can ensure coordination and synergy, while preventing duplication, reducing overlap and enhancing resource pooling. African states have received support from global institutions and partners to curb the spread of COVID-19 and its impacts. For instance, several African states received support from China and grants from the World Bank to fund their pandemic responses (APRM 2020). The EU has reallocated its pledged support to Africa to include €10 million to support implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak.

However, the impact of global efforts to support African states may be impaired by the fact that global governance institutions are themselves struggling under the weight of COVID-19's impact. To overcome this challenge, global actors, including the EU, international financial institutions and the UN must reform and strengthen their own institutions, systems and processes to render them more proactive, responsive and inclusive, reflecting the values they espouse.

Emerging lessons

Since the state has the primary responsibility to govern, lessons emerging from COVID-19 call for deep reflection on the imperative of revitalising the role of the state in governance in Africa. Without capable, accountable, inclusive and participatory governments, addressing contemporary and emerging challenges such as pandemics will remain a pipe dream.

Inadequate service delivery remains one of the greatest threats to sustainable development, peace and security in Africa. In this regard, embracing and adopting technology, innovation and digital governance offer unique opportunities for states.

Pervasive impunity, lack of accountability and corruption in both the public and private sectors continue to threaten effective governance in several African states. It is therefore imperative to inculcate trust between citizens and their government and uphold the social contract through inclusive and participatory governance that delivers. This is particularly true for those on the margins. As Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela both reiterated, the true measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable populations, including women, children, youths and persons with disabilities. Governance should be anchored on service delivery, respect for human rights, upholding the rule of law, constitutionalism and transparency. This requires, among other things, access to credible information, data and statistics.

Conclusion

To enhance effective governance, states should start by addressing governance deficits and redefining and prioritising improvement of state-society relations, as well as revitalising the social contract. This should include abolishing impunity, corruption and accountability deficits based on human rights principles and focusing on the most marginalised segments of the population. Effective state governance requires the solidarity, cooperation and collaboration of regional and global actors. Accordingly, beyond supporting the priorities of states and regional bodies such as the AU, regional and global actors should step forward to contribute to alleviating the socio-economic costs of COVID-19, including debt relief measures.

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How can we judge the AU-EU partnership on peace and security?

Peace and security is a key policy domain in the EU-Africa partnership, due to be renegotiated at the AU-EU Summit next year. Europe and Africa have a long history of cooperation in this area. Though less contentious than other domains of the planned partnership agreement – such as climate change, migration and economic growth – sensitivities do remain, due to the strategic interests of the EU as well as the governance challenges facing the AU.

By Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw and Volker Hauck

Nature of the peace and security partnership

The EU and AU have multiple common peace and security objectives and priorities. The EU's Joint Communication 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa', adopted in 2020, broadly sides with the AU's 'Silencing the Guns by 2020' initiative and the longer term goals of the AU's 'Agenda 2063'. The AU highly appreciates the European support, and the policy dialogue between the two sides is overall constructive and pragmatic, though with regular irritations and some strong frictions.

One such hiccup occurred in 2017, when the EU instituted a 20% cut in its payment for stipends for the African peace support operation in Somalia (AMISOM), citing concerns about the sustainability of AMISOM's dependence on EU finances. Mounting a fierce opposition, African states asserted that the

planned cut devalues the substantial contributions made by African states and their soldiers, who were contributing their finances and also 'blood and sweat' to counter terrorism. They reasoned that terrorism is a global threat and hence a global responsibility, even if counterterrorism operations take place in Africa. The EU on the other hand indicated that it is being regarded like an ATM machine, and expressed dissatisfaction at the slow progress in reforming the AUC to boost the AU's financial autonomy and clarify the relationship between the AU and RECs/RMs. This last issue has still not been fully resolved. The EU in Brussels, strongly backed by the member states, stepped up its bid to go from being a mere 'payer' to a 'player', not only in Africa but in its external action writ large.

Institutional reform, and with it, the imperative to secure predictable and sustainable finance for peace and security,

has been an issue prominently addressed since 2018, when Rwanda chaired the AU. As part of these institutional reforms, the AU tabled a proposal by Donald Kaberuka, the AU High Representative for Financing the African Union, to increase AU's financial autonomy by expanding member states' contributions. Kaberuka's plan introduced a 0.2% levy on eligible imports to all African countries, enabling the AU to collect €1 billion annually from its member states. That money would cover all of the AU's operational costs, 75% of its programmatic costs and 25% of the costs of the peace support operations. The AU considered a 25% contribution to peace support operations fair, given the economic strength of AU member states and the fact that peace is a global public good which requires global contributions.

So far, close to 70% of the Peace Fund's target has been reached. This is encouraging, but far from securing the financial sustainability of African peace and security policy. The AU thus seems likely to be reliant on international partnerships for some time to come. This recognition has invigorated the AU's negotiations with the UN to secure 75% of its costs for peace support operations from the UN's assessed contributions.

An interest-driven partnership

The AU-EU partnership on peace and security has always been driven by shared interests, even if the details have sometimes diverged. Indeed, alignment is tough to achieve, both at the trans-continental levels and between the individual AU and EU member states.

In Africa, member states of the AU do not always play in accordance with continental positions and decisions. They at times prioritise national interests over shared regional or continental objectives. The continent's diversity also makes it difficult to arrive at shared continental objectives. The fissures that open up provide space for external actors to exercise influence in Africa. This is a topic of discussion among AU member states and is one of the principal reasons why the AUC is pushing to represent Africa as a unit and to negotiate the next Africa-EU partnership.

In Europe there is also fragmentation in external action, both between EU member states and between the EU Commission and member states. There is no collective European foreign policy strategy, and intentions on how the EU wants to engage



Source: European External Action Service

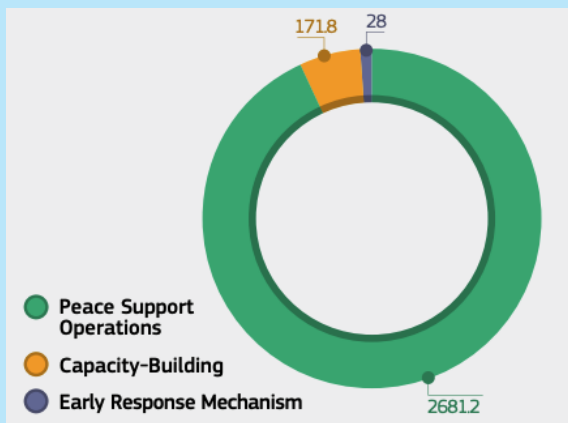
Facts and figures about the EU-AU partnership on peace and security

African leaders put peace and security high on the agenda of the African Union (AU) from its inception in 2002. Major motivating factors were experiences of inter-state war and genocide in the 1990s and the drive to take more responsibility for security on the continent, to avert the influence of external actors. This resulted in the design of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

The APSA introduced several pillars and a range of new institutional arrangements and decision-making processes for conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding. The Peace and Security Council was created as the APSA's central organ, alongside the Continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force, the Peace Fund and the Panel of the Wise. The APSA was supported from its inception by the Peace and Security Department of the AU's newly created secretariat, the AU Commission (AUC). Institutionally, the APSA has embraced and worked with the continent's two regional mechanisms (RMs) and eight regional economic communities (RECs), tasked to coordinate regional economic integration and peace and security processes.

The European Union (EU) is one of the AU's main peace and security partners, second only to the United Nations (UN). Between 2004 and 2019, the EU provided some €2.9 billion in financial assistance to various African peace and security efforts through the APSA via the African Peace Facility. Most of this money (93%) was spent on peace support operations, with the majority of funds going to Somalia (AMISOM). Major funding also went to the African Multinational Joint Task Force fighting Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region (MNJTF) and to the G5 Sahel Joint Force of 'G5 Sahel', a framework for coordinating regional development and security matters in West Africa. Some 6% was spent on strengthening the institutional capacity of the AUC, and 1% went to the Conflict Early Response Mechanism (Figure 1),

Figure 1. APF contracted amounts per activity 2004-2019 (in millions of euros)



The EU support is sorely needed, considering the various national and regional conflicts ongoing in different parts of Africa. In 2007, peace and security became one of the eight partnerships of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) and remained one of the priorities of the partnership. In addition to the financial support provided, the EU established a delegation to the AU in Addis Ababa to accompany JAES implementation. The AU maintains its own Permanent Mission to the EU in Brussels.

Note: This figure does not include €13.8 million for audit, evaluation, communication and technical assistance.

Source: 'African Peace Facility Annual Report 2019', European Commission, p. 10.

in external action are described only broadly in documents such as in the EU Global Strategy, drafted in 2016. While EU member states have their own national geopolitical interests and varied bilateral roles in different parts of Africa, the EU's main focus is on its neighbourhood (North Africa) and the extended neighbourhood in Africa north of the equator (figure 2). EU member states have contributed personnel to UN peace support operations, chiefly MINUSCA (Mali) and MONUSCO (DR Congo). They have also made big investments in the anti-piracy EU Naval Force Somalia Operation Atalanta, which commenced in 2008 and is set to end in 2020.

The Great Lakes region and the Gulf of Guinea are significant security concerns for African leaders, but are not top priority regions of the EU. The EU's focus is more on the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, closely linked to European migration and security interests. Attempts to stabilise Europe's (extended) neighbourhood in Africa through peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding support must be seen against the backdrop of Europe's geopolitical interests north of the equator.

As it strengthens its financial and institutional capabilities, Africa will be in a better position to push back against the vigorous interests of external powers...

More African leadership and autonomy on peace and security

The AU is building its financial autonomy to reduce its dependence on external partners for its peace and security needs. Nonetheless, in the short to medium term, it will continue to rely on partners such as the EU and UN, at least to finance its peace support operations. As it strengthens its financial and institutional capabilities, Africa will be in a better position to push back against the vigorous interests of external

powers, such as some of the Gulf States, Turkey, Russia, China and the United States, but also certain EU countries. France, in particular, which has more than 5,000 troops deployed under its own command in the Sahel and Central Africa.

Keeping external influence at bay will not be easy. The EU's needs in relation to security and migration are sometimes incompatible with Africa's own priorities in regional integration and free movement of people. There is also no sign that the EU will desecuritize migration in the near future. China continues to augment its role in peace and security in Africa and is present in South Sudan and the Horn of Africa. The United States, which has no clear Africa policy, has started to reduce its security support on the continent, though it continues to engage in unproductive competition with China. The Gulf States have competing interests in the Horn of Africa and play active roles in the internal politics of some countries including Somalia.

These complexities are further compounded by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic seems likely to undo years of progress. In a best-case scenario, described by the South Africa-based Institute for Security Studies (2020), it will be 2024 before Africa's per capita GDP recovers to 2019 levels. In the worst case, 2019 levels could be regained only in 2030, which could seriously undermine Africa's ability to self-finance the AU and secure predictable finance for African peace support operations. Moreover, the pandemic could have a spillover effect on conflicts in various parts of Africa. Together with climate-related risks, this could further hinder Africa's progress in managing peace and security on the continent.

To introduce an element of reciprocity, Africa, through some of the AU member state ambassadors in Brussels, could be given a formal role in EPF oversight.

EU support to African peace and security

Europe is committed to providing long-term peace and security support to Africa. The EU is currently redesigning its instruments to streamline and enhance the effectiveness of its

overall external action, with a strong focus on Africa. The new EU budget for 2021-2027 includes provisions for peacebuilding, recovery, rapid conflict response and security, with €12.5 billion allocated to these areas over the seven years, including €5 billion for the European Peace Facility (EPF). The EPF will be used mainly to support African states and regional organisations, and can be spent on stipends for armed forces and military equipment, including lethal weapons. That last is a novelty in EU external action and subject to intense discussions at EU level.

The details of EPF allocations might be addressed in the dialogue on the future partnership between the AU and EU. So far, and building on previous experiences, the EU has designed an approach that does not give the AU any formal role in decisions on EPF spending. By contrast, the EU, together with the UN, have seats on the Board of Trustees of the AU-run Peace Fund. Lack of reciprocity in decision-making has long been a stumbling block in achieving a partnership of 'equals' in the Africa-EU dialogue. To introduce an element of reciprocity, Africa, through some of the AU member state ambassadors in Brussels, could be given a formal role in EPF oversight. Africa's involvement in the monitoring of the EPF and related decision-making would be a step forward – though a small one – towards achieving a 'partnership of equals' between Europe and Africa. Moreover, the EU could channel EPF funds into the AU-run Peace Fund to further strengthen African ownership of peacebuilding operations on the continent – even if, admittedly, the EPF remains a European instrument.

The dialogue ahead of the AU-EU Summit next year will provide an opportunity to reflect on the peace and security partnership and to search for approaches to better support Africa's pursuit of ownership in conflict prevention and management on the continent.

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EU–AU partnership in research and innovation: Identifying strategies for equitable and sustainable research

The post-COVID-19 context: what position should Africa take to deal with the pandemic and adequately address the concerns of its people?

By Mamadou Sy and Mamadou Diouldé Diallo

The coronavirus pandemic continues to pose challenges to health, education, research and production systems in Africa. Indeed, it has brought the entire global economy to its knees. The major powers (China, the United States, the European Union, Russia, Brazil and others) have been most affected, and “the outlook for global growth for 2020 ... is negative – a recession at least as bad as during the global financial crisis [of 2008–9] or worse,” the IMF’s Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said. Africa should thus consider research and innovation (R&I) strategies to respond to the pandemic in order to reduce the economic impact of COVID-19 on the continent.

Which partnership model for research benefiting Africans?

African countries are encouraged to promote scientific diplomacy as a tool to facilitate innovation and collaboration in its areas of interest. Although there are many initiatives targeting Africa, it is up to Africans themselves to adopt the right strategy to ensure beneficial and more efficient cooperation. It would be to the advantage of African states to bolster initiatives like Caast Net Plus, an R&I collaboration between the European Union and sub-Saharan Africa providing a framework for reflection on global challenges such as food security, health and climate change. At the same time, it makes

proposals and recommendations to policymakers to improve cooperation in science, technology and innovation (STI).

In addition, harmonisation efforts in African countries, in addition to the development of regional science and technology (S&T) policies, should be the foundation stone of successful scientific integration in Africa. To that end, it is important to move towards sub-regional or regional funds at the African level. One example is the West African Research Foundation, focusing on West Africa.

A major challenge to STI development in Africa is that the funding of high-profile research programmes and their prospects are driven by donors which, in most cases, demand results. The initiative for equitable research must therefore focus on themes of interest to the countries in the south to achieve optimal ownership of the research programmes by Africans. Low- and middle-income economies would need to contribute to joint research projects in order to negotiate project contracts for the equitable sharing of the benefits of collaborative research as part of the north–south partnership. In order to connect innovation more effectively to African societal and environmental challenges, potential beneficiaries must be closely involved in project development and selection. It is in the same spirit that the innovation ecosystem must be intensively developed by bringing training and research structures, the socio-economic environment and the informal sector closer together by promoting research and development (R&D).

Skills development as a factor in innovation

The AU recognises STI as a tool for accelerating Africa's transition to a knowledge- and innovation-based economy. STI will be crucial to making the vision embodied in the AU's Agenda 2063 a reality. In order to derive maximum benefit from the EU–AU partnership, it is important to reflect on the development of human resources in terms of training through education and research for greater sustainability. In reality, sustainable, integral development geared towards meeting the economic needs of African countries will inevitably require a massive development of qualified S&T personnel capable of meeting Africa's construction needs.

To take full advantage of foreign investment opportunities, it is crucial that the skills available should reflect the requirements of foreign investors and enable countries to attract innovative technologies rather than least-cost assembly tasks.

A failure to master basic and advanced technologies, to innovate and to shift training policies sufficiently towards STEM will deprive us of any possibility of participating, with any chance of success, in international competition involving the knowledge economy.

Establishing a prolific ecosystem of research infrastructures

There is undoubtedly an efficiency gain to be had in establishing regional joint research infrastructures. Developed countries are coming together to develop high technologies.

Our governments must work to set up regional joint research platforms to share financial and human resources to form a critical mass (including scientists, teacher–researchers and evaluators) who will work on joint problems and provide solutions. For instance, the Committee of Ten Heads of State for the Acceleration of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024) and the Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to achieve Agenda 2063 aims call for the provision of knowledge-sharing platforms for STI and advanced digital technologies.

This is already the case in a number of African countries having established African centres of excellence (e.g. Senegal with the following centres: CEA-SAMEF, CEA-MITIC, CEA-AGRISAN and CEA-AGIR) which allow frameworks to be built to consolidate universities, research institutions and national, regional and international companies. These consortia will allow Africa in the near future to reach the level of Asian countries where 40 per cent of all doctoral students work in STI. These infrastructures also enable, alongside advanced disciplinary research teams, the development of multidisciplinary research to respond to the complexity of issues affecting Africa and the world.



Participants of an ACE workshop, Abuja February 2020. Photo credit: association of African Universities

Fostering innovation through evidence-based policy

It is essential that development policies should be based on the knowledge economy so that priorities – like agriculture, food security, emerging fields, renewable energies, building an efficient healthcare system and promoting the creation of competitive businesses – can emerge and their challenges are taken up. Accurate, reliable and relevant data must be used to measure the performance achieved in carrying out joint research programmes. Apart from the fact that STI indicators make it possible to monitor research programmes, increase knowledge transfer to the private sector and ensure effective management of research through coordination and networking, such data also inform STI policymakers.

The Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) in sub-Saharan Africa plays a key role in building the capacities of the science granting councils to support evidence-based research and policies which will contribute to economic, social and environmental development. In addition, STISA advises AU member states to meet the target of allocating at least 1 per cent of their GDP to R&D so that the economic impact of research is felt in people's lives.

All STI initiatives currently under way in the various African countries relevant to the main partnership themes must be mapped out to ensure that African concerns are better taken into account. The results and conclusions of the various

workshops and seminars also need to be translated into action. Research partnerships between the EU and the AU should be demand-driven and priority-based. The launch of sub-regional (west, southern, central and east) councils will facilitate the establishment of competitive funds in respect of common priority themes such as infectious diseases, famine and environmental and security issues.

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ECDPM commentaries



Memo to Michel: How to make most of EU-Africa at the summit

Carl Michiels, Opinion piece for the EU Observer, 15 October 2020

On the agenda of today's European Council there is the item EU-Africa relations. It is a bit of an 'orphan' item. It was planned months ago, because member states were supposed to discuss and agree on their approach for the EU-AU summit, scheduled for the end of October. Although that summit has now been postponed, EU-Africa is still on the agenda, mainly to show – to Africans and to Europeans – that member states take the relationship seriously.



Germany and South Africa together can protect and advance the women, peace and security agenda

Sophie Desmidt, ECDPM blog, 12 October 2020

While the world 'celebrates' the 20th anniversary of UN security resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, Sophie Desmidt is less impressed with progress made. In her latest commentary, she calls on Germany and South Africa to ensure that momentum is not entirely lost in the last months of their respective EU and AU presidencies.



The AU-EU Summit didn't prove immune to COVID-19 – but that may be a blessing in disguise

Geert Laporte, ECDPM blog, 14 September 2020

This year was supposed to be crucial for Africa-Europe relations, culminating in the sixth AU-EU Summit, scheduled for 28 and 29 October in Brussels. But then COVID-19 happened. After a long palaver, a decision was finally taken: the summit will be postponed to 2021, although a date still needs to be fixed. Geert Laporte explains why postponing may not be such a bad thing, help relaunch the relationship.



A summer like no other – What's at stake in critical EU external policy processes

Andrew Sherriff, Alexei Jones, et al. ECDPM blog, 6 July 2020

Unusually worried you may miss some big policy developments over the summer? July and August are traditionally quiet months for the European Union (EU), but this will be a summer like no other. In the coming weeks and months, a number of critical processes for EU external action are set to take shape, often faced with further delays and general uncertainty because of COVID-19.



Following the money: Why a COVID-19 marker might not help

San Bilal and Mariella Di Ciommo, ECDPM blog, 29 June 2020

The EU is putting forward the idea of a COVID-19 marker on aid data to track the unprecedented mobilisation of resources to tackle the crisis globally. Rather than such a marker, the EU should consider supporting more sustainable and technologically-savvy approaches to ensure much needed transparency and accountability.

Latest ECDPM publications



Will COVID-19 change migration cooperation between European and African countries?

Amanda Bisong, ECDPM paper, October 2020

This briefing note highlights six issues that European and African policymakers should consider when negotiating migration cooperation between countries in both continents in a post-COVID-19 setting. These focus on irregular migration, return migration, migration and development, mobility of migrant workers and students, legal pathways to migration, and diaspora engagement.



EU trade policy for sustainable food systems

Francesco Rampa, Olivier de Schutter, Sean Woolfrey, Nick Jacobs, San Bilal, Jeske van Seters and Emile Frison, joint IPES-Food and ECDPM brief, October 2020

The European Union (EU) has committed to supporting the global transition to more sustainable food systems. As the world's largest food importer, the EU can use its trade policies and agreements to stimulate and incentivise more sustainable practices by its trade partners. In this brief, authors from the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) and ECDPM provide specific recommendations on how the EU can do so.



Fit for purpose: The EU's role in global health in the era of COVID-19

Pauline Veron and Mariella Di Ciommo, ECDPM paper, October 2020

Although COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the economy, politics and health, it did not cause a fundamental change in the rules of the game when it comes to the EU's limited role as a global health player. The block needs to address persistent coordination issues between the EU and its member states – as well as across EU institutions – if it wishes to enhance its effectiveness and credibility in this arena.



Protecting migrants and refugees in North Africa: Challenges and opportunities for reform

Anna Knoll and Chloe Teevan, ECDPM paper, October 2020

This paper looks at asylum, reception and migrant protection systems in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt. It seeks to understand some of the dynamics driving or preventing reform of these systems and proposes some initial entry points for international cooperation.

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