

Africa matters for Europe, Europe matters for Africa

The European Union and Africa are longstanding partners, but our relationship is changing. We need to be creative to address the global challenges such as security and climate change. Under the impulse of the new Africa-Europe Alliance, we are committed to move our partnership to the next level. Together we will ensure sustainable investments and jobs to enable Africa young population to harness its full potential. Investing in our new Alliance is an investment in our shared future.

In the face of global challenges and an increasingly fragmented world, the European Union remains a champion of multilateralism. It is part of who we are. Our DNA is built on working together and finding unity in diversity.

We want to engage in the world as a positive force for change and remain committed to a rules-based global order. This is the best guarantee to achieve a safer and better world for all. We cannot do this alone. We need partners. The European Union and Africa share a long history marked by contrasts and common achievements. We are neighbours and natural allies with mutual interests and common challenges.

Together we will keep working towards stability and prosperity for all. The essential element in this relationship is trust. Partners need to be able to count on each other. Europe has been a reliable partner in the past and will remain so in the future. We keep our engagements of the Paris Agreement, abide by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and remain a strong supporter of the UN system. We are also a strong supporter of the AU Agenda 2063.

Our shared international values are the foundations on which our common actions are built. These include human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy. To ensure that these conditions are met everywhere in the world, we need to strengthen resilience, peace, security and the rule of law.

The nature of the security threats that we all face is increasingly complex and cannot be addressed with a purely military approach. Those threats are multiple, going from radicalization to terrorist attacks to maritime piracy, trafficking of drugs, arms and human beings.

Facing those threats requires a closer collaboration across regions and international institutions. In our relations with Africa, we expanded our approach towards peace building in order to encompass the whole process, from conflict prevention to post-crisis reconstruction.

One of the biggest challenges facing our world today is climate change. The European Union shows global leadership in climate action and will continue to do so. But we need to collaborate with everyone and especially with our African partners. Together we stepped up our game in environmental protection to counter biodiversity losses, fight wildlife trafficking and conserve our vital oceans.

The development of a circular economy is a crucial element to tackle all phases in the lifecycle of a product. We need to overcome many obstacles to deal with plastic pollution and establish effective waste management. Africa is actually leading in the ban of plastic worldwide. We do have to seize the opportunities these challenges pose: new green jobs and various health benefits. The quality of life of our citizens and their health is a priority.

The economic relationship between Europe and Africa remains strong: Europe is the first trading partner of Africa. EU is the main external market for African products with € 151 billion of exports in 2018. It is also the main importer of African industrial products whose volumes increased by 12% between 2015 and 2018 reaching €51 billion of imports. There is a fresh, new impulse, which will guide us towards a new future: the proposal of a new Africa-Europe Alliance for sustainable investment and jobs.

The goal of the Alliance is to create up to 10 million jobs via African and European investments. These jobs will enable the young population of Africa to harness their full potential.

We are working hard to deliver on our commitments: the EU External Investment Plan boosts strategic investments and strengthens the necessary private sector participation. We want to mobilise investments, but also invest in people. This is why we are scaling up concrete action in education and skills development. Ultimately, our economic relationship will evolve towards a continent-to-continent free trade agreement. Working towards this long-term perspective, the European Commission wants to make maximum use of the EU's trade arrangements with Africa notably the Economic Partnership Agreements, so that they can be building blocks of the African Continental Free Trade Area and offer the larger market access to the African industrial value chains.

Our partnership is an investment in our shared future. Supporting each other and mutually stand on our commitments will make the world a better, safer, more stable and more sustainable place to live.

Ghana is a natural partner for the EU in the implementation of this Africa-Europe Alliance, which for many aspects connects with President Akufo Addo vision of a Ghana beyond Aid and his commitment for the Sustainable Development Goals.

We count on Ghana to build a strong and effective Alliance between Africa and the European Union.