

A Partnership of Equals: Africa-EU relations in an increasingly complex world

Online Conference
28 May 2021

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What you will find in this document

The Conference “A Partnership of Equals: Africa-EU relations in an increasingly complex world”, was organized on the framework of the Presidency Project “Towards an open, fair and sustainable Europe in the World”. The event brought together both officials and civil society from Africa and Europe to discuss the main issues on the table regarding the Africa-EU partnership.

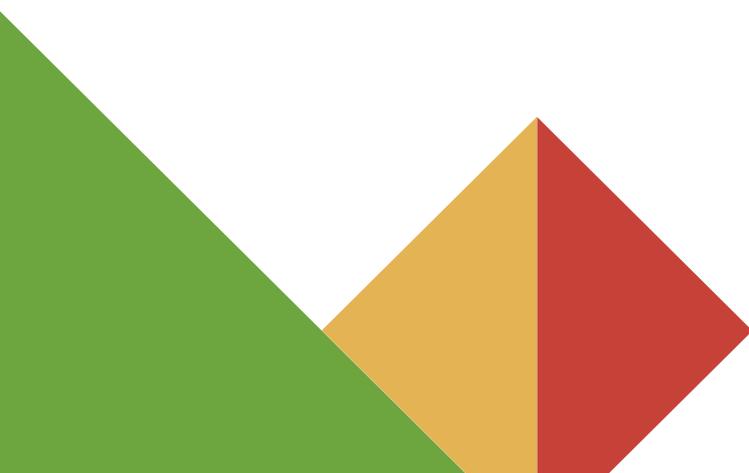
The Covid-19 pandemic deepened already existing challenges and highlighted the need for structural transformations in our societies. From the impacts of climate change to the increasing inequalities, the pandemic made it impossible to ignore that global challenges can only be met through genuine cooperation between all countries and sectors. In a key moment for Africa-EU relations and in the run up to the next AU-EU Summit, the Conference “A Partnership of Equals: Africa-EU relations in an increasingly complex world” aimed to discuss the fundamental principles that should be at the core of a genuine and meaningful partnership, focusing on its potential to promote people-centered policies.

The event gathered 16 speakers and 4 moderators from both Africa and Europe, but also related with the Portuguese Presidency (counting with the participation of 3 speakers from Portuguese institutions, namely the Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation), representing public institutions and decision makers (3 from the EU, specifically European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships, and 4 from African institutions, like the Permanent Representative of the African Union to the EU and ACP States and the Senior Advisor to the AU High Representative on AU-EU relations), but also Civil Society representatives (8 speakers and moderators from Civil Society organisations in Europe, as the Executive Director of CONCORD, and 2 speakers from Civil Society organisations in Africa, namely the Executive Director Uganda NGO Forum). The event took place online on the 28th of May 2021, from 9.30AM to 4.30PM GMT+1. The session was conducted both in Portuguese and English and simultaneous interpretation was available for Zoom participants.



The Conference had a total of 133 participants with very high representation from Civil Society organisations (with a total of 74 participants), proving that the sector has a considerable interest on the subject and is mobilised to contribute to the discussions, but also decision makers and political and institutional representatives (with a total of 22 representatives). Other relevant stakeholders were academia representatives (11 participants) and the general public. Female participants doubled the number of male participants and the predominant age groups ranged from 25 to 55 years old.

The event contributed for the integration of important dimensions in a discussion that was already underway, but which had so far been mainly focused on its geopolitical dimension (for example the issues of human development, human rights, people centred economic relations, the promotion of policies to fight inequalities). Furthermore, it also served to confirm that it is possible to do more to make this a democratic and inclusive process. At the conference, it was possible to bring together political authorities from both sides, as well as Civil Society representatives from both continents in a constructive dialogue that showed that it is possible to replicate this type of format (or others that integrate Civil Society, that has once more showed that it is able and willing to contribute for the ongoing discussions).



Agenda of the Conference

9:30 AM – Opening

- Ana Patrícia Fonseca, President of Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD
- Francisco André, Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

9:45 AM – Keynote address – Africa-EU Partnership in an increasingly complex world

- Jutta Urpilainen, European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships (video)
- Awad Sakine Ahmat, Permanent Representative of the African Union to the EU and ACP States

10:05 AM – Africa-EU Civil Society Survey – presentation of key findings

- Ian Mengel, VENRO

10:20 AM – Towards a genuine and meaningful Africa-EU Partnership

Moderated by Josianne Gauthier, Secretary General CIDSE

- Faten Aggad, Senior Advisor to the AU High Representative on AU-EU relations
- Luís Leandro da Silva, Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Tanya Cox, Director CONCORD Europe
- Moses Isooba, Executive Director Uganda NGO Forum

12:00 PM – Lunch break



2:00 PM – An equality driven Partnership that leaves no one behind

Moderated by Luísa Fondello, Caritas Europa

- Cristina Moniz, Vice-President of Camões Institute – Portuguese Development Agency
- Ernestina Menezes, Executive Director National Institute for the Promotion of Gender Equality of São Tomé and Príncipe
- Carine Nsoudou, Executive Director Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT)

2:45 PM – A fair, inclusive, and sustainable economic Partnership

Moderated by Jean Saldanha, Director Eurodad

- Domenico Rosa, Head of Unit for “Strategic Partnerships with Africa and with the ACP” in DG INTPA (European Commission)
- Paul Okumu, Head of Secretariat Africa Platform

3:30 PM – Human Rights at the core of a democratic partnership

Moderated by David Kode, CIVICUS

- Marisa Matias, Member of the European Parliament (GUE/NGL)
- Salah S. Hammad, Head of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat at the African Union

4:15 PM – Closing



Explanation of each of the sessions during the Conference

9:30 AM – Opening

The opening of the Conference had the objective of framing the following discussions on the context of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU. As a key priority of the Portuguese Presidency, Portugal's Secretary of State highlighted the importance of EU-Africa relations for the future of global interdependencies. Francisco André's remarks were largely focused on the geopolitical approach to the talks between both blocs as a guiding principle that could enable the creation of a genuine partnership. On the Platform's side and based on the key finding of a Platform report, however, Ana Patrícia Fonseca highlighted the importance of managing the process in a truly inclusive way intended at putting people's needs at the core of the future Partnership. Being a key priority for both the Platform and its Presidency Project partners, Ana Patrícia Fonseca then proceeded by calling on decision makers to build on the discussions of the Conference to organize consultation moments that include African and European Civil Society.

9:45 AM – Keynote address – Africa-EU Partnership in an increasingly complex world

Considering the theme of the Conference around the aspects that would have to be considered for the Africa-EU Partnership to be genuine and meaningful, it was important to highlight the importance of elements such as Human Rights, Democracy, and civic participation in the relationship between both continents. In order to set the scene for the following discussions, this session had remarks, presented by EU Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen and African Union Permanent Representative Awad Sakine Ahmat, both focused on the European Union's and African Union's perspectives on how to go forward with discussions in key areas of interest for both sides. The session "Africa-EU Partnership in an increasingly complex world" served as a general framework for the keynote part of the session, as it contributed to highlight the key challenges observed on the ongoing discussions.

10:05 AM – Africa-EU Civil Society Survey – presentation of key findings

Relations between Africa and Europe and establishing a meaningful and true partnership will only be possible with the involvement and participation of larger parts of our societies, rather than only public officials and decision makers, with civil society actors from both continents being one of the most important actors in the discussions for a renewed Africa-EU Strategy.

This session was aimed at sharing the key findings of a first-ever Africa-Europe Civil Society Survey with more than 360 participants conducted by VENRO.



10:20 AM – Towards a genuine and meaningful Africa-EU Partnership

The first roundtable of the Conference was intended at bringing together both officials and civil society from Europe and Africa to discuss about the key elements of the process of building a genuine and meaningful partnership. The overarching goal of this panel and the following was to reflect on the aspects that have to be considered in order to guarantee that the partnership goes beyond geopolitics and effectively relates to people's needs. As the first moment for open discussion of the conference, the panel had also the objective of paving the way to the afternoon sessions.

2:00 PM – An equality driven Partnership that leaves no one behind

Following the morning's broader discussions, the afternoon sessions were intended at building on the overarching conclusions of the first panel and dedicated to discussing about the areas/themes where the partnership must focus in order to more closely relate to people's needs. As a key priority for the Portuguese Presidency, Human Development was an important part of this panel. The goal was thus to call on the key issues to be considered for the partnership to become an equality driven instrument – especially in terms of gender equality, Human Development and human rights focused migration policies.

2:45 PM – A fair, inclusive, and sustainable economic Partnership

The panel "A fair, inclusive, and sustainable economic Partnership" was aimed at discussing how the economic dimension of EU-Africa relations can deliver on the promise for a more balanced Partnership while contributing to sustainable development. This perspective allowed for looking at the specific mechanisms that have been implemented over the past few years and how aid/trade/tax/debt dynamics between both continents have been impacting relations in this regard, doing so with a future-oriented perspective. During the session, the recent developments in EU policies and their role in balancing the Partnership (the role of blending, for instance) were presented and served as a starting point for the discussion that followed.

3:30 PM – Human Rights at the core of a democratic partnership

By framing the debate on the idea of "Human Rights at the core of a democratic partnership", the discussion was centred in the importance of placing Human Rights at the core of the relationship between both continents and on how integrating Civil Society in the centre of political discussions can contribute for this to become a genuinely democratic partnership. The idea was to focus on how to advance on these goals from a future-oriented perspective, looking at the persisting challenges that each speaker identified in this regard.

Challenges and ways forward on the subject

Opening remarks

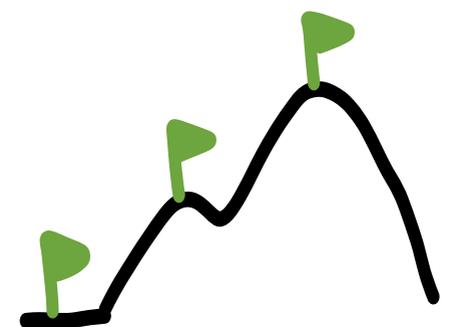


Ana Patrícia Fonseca, President of Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD

It is important to try to contribute to a more well-balanced and people-centred relationship through an inclusive dialogue which is of the idea and purpose that guided us when preparing the agenda of this conference.

The EU-Africa relations have been marked by asymmetry. The EU's narrative of partnering with Africa highlights the benefits and mutual interests – **through a more inclusive approach we will be able to bring the EU-Africa relationship closer to focusing on the real needs of people.**

The study that the Portuguese Platform presented at the Conference includes a set of recommendations related with the need for mutual cooperation, co-responsability and inclusive partnership, that should be considered.





Francisco André, Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

The need for a partnership of equals between EU and Africa goes without saying. The need to highlight parity and equality is so important. For many years it was not a partnership between equals. EU and African citizens don't want that anymore. From our daily dialogue with African partners we hear that they need: **investment, knowledge, sharing of technology, creation of jobs, less barriers to international trade and support for African applications to leading positions in international organisations.** But we live in a very complex world, with a lot of bureaucracy, therefore we need to overcome the approach of the past.

Ursula von der Leyen made it clear that the partnership with Africa is a top priority of her mandate. Today we must discuss, address, and build a partnership between equals that combines common goals that includes all stakeholders. One essential element of this partnership is to be able to listen, which is not easy since there are countries with different interests, including within the two blocs – European and African. But when we're fully committed to create this partnership it's possible to overcome these barriers.

The right way forward is to discuss, to hold inclusive dialogues, to develop instruments (such as the Global Europe instrument – NDICI).

The current pandemic has made us realize how important it is to tackle climate change, that's why we thought it was important to create a dialogue platform, which will translate into sessions over a month and more activities (the Secretary of State was mentioning the Green Talks and the High Level Forum EU-Africa on Green Investment held in April 2021). We need to move forward reinforcing the relation between EU and Africa for a better understanding among ourselves and our institutions. **The dialogue that we need to foster must go beyond the events between decision-makers. Therefore, we need to hold and create events, discovering a new form of dialogue.**

The NGOs have played a fundamental role, especially the Portuguese Platform, in the cooperation sector. In areas like Education, the NGOs are indispensable and are in the front line in African countries. The complementary work among Civil Society, European institutions and government can take cooperation to a new level.

Keynote address – Africa-EU Partnership in an increasingly complex world



Jutta Urpilainen, European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships

We live in a complex world – democracy has been in decline for a decade, Covid-19 has made matters worse. The EU is working hard for a green sustainable and inclusive global recovery – a recovery for the people, human development and in particular education. This cannot be accomplished by governments alone – **we need a strong, determined Civil Society by our side.**

Africa is a priority of this geopolitical Commission. **Our new partnership with Africa will be innovative and transformational**, as we work with NGOs. Our continued collaboration for the next EU AU Summit will be crucial. The Africa-EU Civil Society Forum will be a particularly important moment – I want to make sure young citizens are heard and are part of decision making and that is why I will soon appoint a special advisor on Youth.

Women and girls must also be central to our efforts to building back better. The EU will continue to contribute to empower women and girls. We will promote gender equality in line with our ambitious EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III).





Awad Sakine Ahmat, Permanent Representative of the African Union to the EU and ACP States

It's important to discuss ideas between all the stakeholders, especially with Civil Society. **We need to come out of the donor/beneficent paradigm and focus on an equal partnership.** Today Africa cannot live without Europe and vice-versa. Europeans should see the great openness and the large space that Africa and AU have to offer to engage in the development of a prosperous Africa.

It is not possible to think of jobs, sustainable development and ensure gender equality if we do not engage in the industrialization of Africa. Africa's first trade partner is Europe and it must see this opportunity to invest in Africa for transformation which in turn will allow skilled European men and women to invest in Africa. We do not need to create offices and institutions to communicate. Countries have their particularities and individual complexities. **We need internal institutions to change things.**

To engage in a cooperation between equals we need to understand and accept the value of the African and European continents and the role that Civil Society can play.

Industrialization in Africa is important. Africa is an open continent, if Europeans are not seizing this opportunity, then they will leave for others to seize it. There are cooperation instruments available, but **continental cooperation must be found on financial instruments which will in turn contribute to financial development and implement control systems.**

It cannot enhance financing without guaranteeing accountability.

AU should be able to share its internal priorities with the EU. What do you have to do to ensure the financing of such priority projects? All stakeholders – NGOs, Civil Society, citizens – must together join hands to convert to a cooperation of equals.



Africa-EU Civil Society Survey – presentation of key findings



Ian Mengel, VENRO

Africa-Europe Civil Society (CS) Survey aims to answer the question: **how does Civil Society understand the Africa-Europe cooperation and how familiar is Civil Society with the official partnership between Africa-EU?**

The questionnaire started with a general question to find out how important the Africa-EU relations are. **Over 70% of people think they are very important** but many of the participants think the cooperation itself is not working very well. European participants are more skeptical than African participants.

What are the priorities in which this cooperation should focus on? From a European perspective, **migration, digital transformation and green transition**. From an African perspective, **sustainable growth and jobs**.

Good governance and transparency are important issues for Civil Society from both continents. Many Civil Society actors are not very familiar with Africa-EU official partnership, at the same time most of them want to be more strongly involved. This is a sign of lack of information and that the structures are not very actively promoted. A deepened dialogue between stakeholders is needed to promote greater involvement.



Towards a genuine and meaningful Africa-EU Partnership



Moderated by
Josianne Gauthier



Faten Aggad, Senior Advisor to the AU High Representative on AU-EU relations

One of the major challenges to build a genuine and meaningful partnership would be **articulating the value of the partnership in terms of the relations between Africa and Europe**. What is the core of EU-Africa relations about? In terms of relations between EU-Africa, seen from the African side, there is a great potential, a clarity in terms of the importance of the relationship for Africa. We agreed in 2007, in Lisbon, that we would have a paradigm shift. The so called **“beyond aid” debate was triggered**. It was a needed discussion because of the complexity of the challenges that both Europe and Africa face now. We need to find more complex ways of supporting the partnership. What has been clear from the African side is that aid resources alone will not be enough, since the 1990s it has been declining in terms of percentage of aid in Gross Domestic Product, requiring to rebalance the partnership and development efforts in the continent with more creative ways of responding to those challenges, including in financial terms. This means there is an even greater urgency to move from this aid paradigm and **recognise there is no longer a leverage in the partnership but an increasingly limited contribution**. Other challenge for the partnership to become meaningful is to shift in terms of principles:

- 1) recognise that we're mutually dependent on one another – there is a need to create a geographic space of prosperity that would benefit people from both continents. For Africa the Continental Free Trade Area is a new opportunity for European partners and for new modalities for development on the Continent;
- 2) both regions have something to offer, respecting the contribution of each one of them.

We often speak of what the partnership can look at, but we need to talk more about the process through which we're doing that – a solid and real dialogue, not only instrumental dialogue as we are going for the Summit. We will need (and we're far from it) to align our ambitions to realities. We need to implement the partnership effectively, we need to mainstream the dialogues, the financial mechanisms that we are using and bring it together from both, and by taking narrative to action.





Luís Leandro da Silva, Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Promoting EU-Africa relations has always been an important topic for Portugal in which it has invested political and diplomatic efforts and managed to achieve some results. But the dialogue has to be accompanied by substantial and concrete results.

Africa is a fundamental partner if the EU wants to be a geopolitical player in the world and have increasing influence on global issues. Africa has a big demographic strength; it is a huge multilateral force, and it has geostrategic importance. Africa will be a very important centre of world economic activity. Another element of the geostrategic importance of Africa are the high-level summits that are taking place and the number of embassies in African countries.

To create the partnership that we want, we need to:

- 1) abandon the old paradigm of donor/recipient** – there is need for more investment, more private sector activities to create more jobs for the youth, and to invest in the project of African Continental Free Trade Area is key for African industrialization;
- 2) We need to focus on everything that is needed to do in recovering from Covid** – bringing vaccines to Africa, increasing Africa's production, socioeconomic recovery, greater financial access for Africa economy, mobilizing investment. There is an attention to the green growth for digital transformation – but we also need to do more for the basic issues such as in human development, like health and education.





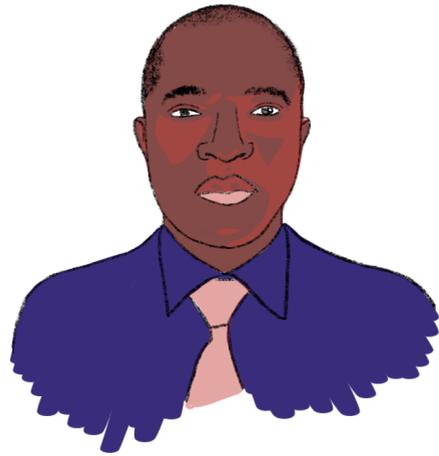
Tanya Cox, Director CONCORD Europe

CSOs in Africa want to be self-sufficient and independent, they want Africa not to rely on Europe nor on no one. They know that Africa is a rich continent. They also talk about a new kind of slavery in Africa – new colonizers, the Chinese. CSOs don't feel like they can trust their governments to do the right thing, nor the western powers.

EU wants to meet the economic interests but also has values and wants to meet the needs of African people and their rights. **A transformational relationship means that you design the agenda and the goals together, and you think of the long-term achievement.**

EU-Africa nations should sit together to address the injustices between the countries, in an honest way – Europe will need to address its colonial past. Africa and Europe are not equal at the moment – there is a need to **rebalance the partnership**. By doing that, it will **create trust between the continents**. Then there will be humility to listen to each other – consulting with people, cocreating the agenda.

We need to be radical. We need to do more than debt rescheduling. Debt stops governments from investing in public quality services, not only to deal with Covid but also for the social contract. Domestic resources mobilisation is key to quality services for people, innovation, energy, investment in climate change. The current trade relationship between Africa-EU is neither fair, nor equal so it should change. Policy coherence is fundamental to development. EU needs to do a lot in sharing technologies and knowledge.



Moses Isooba, Executive Director Uganda NGO Forum

The first thing to address is language: what the EU and Africa have had so far was not a partnership, was a funding relationship, that has been constructed on control and mistrust. We need to talk about on whose terms we are taking the partnership forward and who is benefiting from it. The whole concept of the narrative that we use is important in shaping the partnership.

Africa is rising but we are concerned that it should not be about the continent but should be about the people. **We want to see the people rising and not just the continent rising.** While the economic indicators are growing, the social indicators are not.

We don't want the EU to bring vaccines to Africa. **We're interested in patent waivers, transfer of technology and capacity building – we cannot talk about partnership when EU's only concerns are with the health of its citizens and not the health of Africans.**

Trade and development have been fused. What we've seen in EU's missions to Africa is that the Head of Mission carries two hats: on one side is the hat of Trade and on the other side the hat of Development. The challenge that we have right now is that the "hat of Trade" seems to be shadowing the "hat of Development". It is important to balance the power between trade and development.

Are we having this as a genuine conversation, or is the EU having this conversation because China is taking its' space? This is one of the questions that we need to be asking.

When we talk about the **German "Marshall Plan for Africa"** it takes back to the colonial time. We need to change the language and the narrative that we use. There is an important point on the quality and volume of Aid, because we see



there is a higher volume of financial support that goes to the governments and very limited support to Civil Society. To hold governments accountable, it is important to strengthen funds for Civil Society.

It is important that we move away from a funding relationship to an actual partnership: move away from control and mistrust, to trust and coaching, to be able to address ourselves as partners, as equals and this is going to take time. We cannot say now that we're equals but we can focus on following this direction having in mind on what systemically brought us to where we are right now.

How would we transform this narrative into actual reality and what are the challenges that you see right now?

Faten Aggad – I would highlight two points.

The first one is: the message is defined depending to whom we are talking to. Time must be dedicated to understand and have a meaningful discussion rather than rushing in order to accomplish deadlines. To have a paradigm shift we need to have the courage to take the time to listen, to cocreate in a way that involve planning with caution the stakeholders that are brought to the table; how do we set priorities. The dialogue will require a certain ownership of the results that will come out. There is a system of accountability, with states, people, civil society, parliaments, and all of these need to be taken into account. We need to go back to the process that should not replace what international partnerships are about: a proper process of inclusive consultations.

The second one, in the case of migration, for instance, we still need for the paradigm shift to recognize the value that Africa also brings to the table. We have to strike a balance in terms of the obsession on readmission with the free movement of people. We remain very far from a true discussion on mobility of African, just as we discuss the mobility of other people around the world. We need to find space to genuinely have that discussion. We have been speaking of establishing safe migration routes, but we haven't started a proper dialogue, because there is this strong obsession with returns and readmission, due to domestic pressure.

The last point is about clarity. Where is the space for Europe-Africa partnership in the NDICI (within the MFF)? The risk is that later there will not be ways of concretely implement the partnership or other outcome from the Summit. The means of implementation is an important discussion to have.

What are the challenges that you see and main challenges and the values to be shared between both continents?

Luís Leandro da Silva – As was said before, the points on honesty, trust, fairness and humility are extremely significant and must be brought into the partnership. We need to listen more to each other and it is fundamental that we listen to the Africans: what their priorities are, so that we can merge them and can be common priorities. I think we have agreement on the main themes that should form the substance of the next Summit. The European side places more priority on the green transition and the digital; the African side more focused on the issue of economic recovery and health recovery from Covid. Agreeing with what was said it is not sufficient to bring more vaccines, we need to do more transfer of technology and build African capacity for vaccine production and health projects. We (Portugal) have been very supportive of that and we hope there will be a programme for that.

There is a lot of common ground, peace and security and governance are fundamental issues, as well as multilateralism, investment and trade. And there is the issue of migration and mobility, with different perspectives from both blocs. The Portuguese perspective is that we have to find a balanced approach to this, meaning that we need to do much more on the mobility side, with programmes such as Erasmus Plus, with a greater interchange between the Youth from both continents. Portugal is especially keen on what is called the people to people contacts, which is fundamental for the EU Africa partnership. This is the pillar of mobility that we need to increase.

How to engage civil society in Africa in a meaningful way to strength the partnership, in order to ensure that voices of communities are heard and people from the two continents are involved? Is there a space to rethink the process of consultation?

Moses Isooba – What could trigger not only civil society participation, is to rethinking the engagement and be truthful to the subsidiary principle that those closest to the problem usually have the solutions. That means that our colleagues from the North would have to immunise themselves against the disease of privilege and power that often goes ahead of them and that normally damages the conversation.

As the EU tries to push the reset button on the way the partnership must be build, there is an increase in nationalism and leaders in Europe that will try to redefine development. Are these leaders ready to do that technology transfer, mentioned earlier, or to promote what I have called “the vaccine appetite”.



Also there have been challenges related with Aid: the Aid industrial complex needs to be changed in order to be possible to engage in a meaningful and equal partnership, because it is premised on vested interests and no neutrality. What we see right now is that each country is wanting to have a portion of Africa.

How can we move way from economic investment and commit to Human Development efforts?

Tanya Cox – From a CONCORD perspective, we have been trying to reach out much more to people to whom we don't normally speak to and make sure when we are talking on behalf of other people, that we are reflecting what they will like us to be saying. On recent advocacy statements, we try to reflect what we are hearing from our African colleagues as well. One of the things that we have been hearing is to put local civil society actors in the driver's seat and this is what we would like to be doing more and more and urging the EU to do. Reaching out to the huge variety and diversity of local civil society takes time and the EU sometimes has its schedules, but that hampers true consultation, especially if you don't start in time. An then we need to listen to what people actually say and people are talking and like to put on the agenda is Human Development, health care, education and livelihoods. To mainstream Human Development in the 4 EU priorities is not enough and we need to look at Human Development in its own right and fitting it where it suits us.

We need to rebuild better. I don't think the EU has moved from a focus on GDP, and yet we know that GDP does not create more wellbeing for people and has caused a lot of environmental damage. What we need to look at know, is how we can reorient the economy and the way it functions so that it really prioritises people and planet first and not profit, privilege and power. This will help us address many of the issues that we have, like huge inequalities. The way the economy has been functioning has been one of the main causes of the inequalities we see now – both between people and also between countries.



An equality driven Partnership that leaves no one behind



Moderated by
Luísa Fondello,
Caritas Europa



Cristina Moniz, Vice-President of Camões Institute – Portuguese Development Agency

Relations with Africa are a priority for the Portuguese Presidency – a partnership based on equality and inclusiveness, leaving no one behind.

Some of the efforts made:

- Green investment – Green Talks in several European and African capitals.
- Humanitarian area (triple nexus) – identification of common solutions and African concerns in this area
- Human Development, particularly Education – Council conclusions.
- At the end of the Presidency, we need to make sure that the priorities selected are going to be implemented.



Ernestina Menezes, Executive Director National Institute for the Promotion of Gender Equality of São Tomé and Príncipe

The work of NGOs is very important because considering the countries and governments there is a need to involve Civil Society in the implementation, and especially in the monitoring of projects that are signed between the two parts. One of the recommendations is that organized civil society be more involved, not only the implementers but the financiers and the financing instruments. But also, how we can improve the supervision of implementers and implementation partners. There is a need to guarantee the transparency of these instruments and also to assess the impact. We need to invest more in human resources but also in exchanging experiences.

We know that the EU is a developed region that complies with human rights principles, so it is important that they help to achieve better and greater results in this regard. So, we have listed **fundamental issues for cooperation: objectivity, transparency and assessing the impact.**



Carine Nsoudou, Executive Director Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT)

The Covid-19 pandemic has proved that no one is safe until everyone is safe, which has brought up the topics of solidarity and vaccine nationalism as well as the leave no one behind principle.

Covid-19 has shown that migrants and people with a migrant background have an important role in Europe and in their home countries. They have been in the front line, raising funds to finance equipment in Africa, have settled face-mask production lines. **There is a need for a proposal of legal migration and to make sure that it will be a triple win – win for migrants, for the destination countries and for countries of origin.**

Collective and inclusive action is the only way to overcome global challenges – hence there is a need to form fully inclusive stakeholder partnerships. CSOs, including African organisations, need to be part of the partnership. These three issues need to be linked and discussed within the dialogue for partnership.

What would you like to see as a mark of the Portuguese Presidency?

Cristina Moniz – Ecological pact, digital transition is important, but it cannot be the top priority for Africa. There is a need to pay attention to human development issues. In the Council conclusions, we focus mainly on health. Besides health, education is still a priority of the Portuguese Presidency. We can never forget the implementation of human rights, gender equality. Inclusiveness in those dialogues is also needed to be highlighted.

Which are your recommendations for the Partnership?

Ernestina Menezes – the Covid pandemic has reached everyone in an unexpected way and in the face of this situation we have to focus on the technical empowerment of national staff, in addition to focusing our attention on the issue of key and special groups, vulnerable groups (not only the issue of gender women/men), since the pandemic has shown that there are other vulnerable groups that have also suffered from the impact. Another area to be highlighted is technology – it is the basic axis on which we can cooperate and work. Technology should focus on the issue of women and we need to improve women's access to technology.

Is the proposal that is on the table regarding the Africa-EU partnership a way to recruit talents to Europe?

Carine Nsoudou – one of the lessons of the pandemic is that human development cannot be forgotten. The crisis was both a health and economic crisis with consequences for employability and job creation. There is a need to focus on education and on the creation of skills – this is an issue that must not be forgotten in the partnership.

Regarding the inclusiveness, we need to ensure a dialogue in a very systematic and structured way – organizations have an added value.

Regarding the talent partnership, there is a balance that needs to be found, therefore the triple win. Ways to mitigate the potential impact of this measure are circular migration and education programs in Africa.



A fair, inclusive, and sustainable economic Partnership



Moderated by
Jean Saldanha,
Director Eurodad



Domenico Rosa, Head of Unit for “Strategic Partnerships with Africa and with the ACP” in DG INTPA

Before Covid-19, what was important to Africa was to build its own green, digital and social industrial revolution. Once the Covid crisis began, these fundamentals remain more valid. However, the money that goes to development cooperation through ODA is not sufficient.

Basic education to end literacy poverty remains of importance, but also to provide women and the youth with skills.

Lastly, what is missing in Africa is a real stakeholder engagement in policymaking, which is ours and Africa’s responsibility.



Paul Okumu, Head of Secretariat Africa Platform

In every single occasion there was an attempt of establishing a partnership with Africa, the EU became very tough with Africa's concerns. The EU has not tried a true partnership with Africa. We can talk about fairness, inclusiveness, but this is not the reality.

Regarding the imbalanced trade relation between Africa and the EU, what would be the conditions to have a more balanced relation trade wise and also relating with fiscal aspects and that it doesn't contribute to increase inequalities?

Paul Okumu – Africa has the highest rates of raw materials now. The UK is the largest exporter of tea to the EU. The UK does not produce tea. So, what we need to ask ourselves is: if we would allow the continent to trade further then in raw materials, Africa would go extremely far. Africa would like to process every single raw material that it produces, but the EU keeps on creating very complicated laws and policies that make it almost impossible for Africa to overcome this position. So, it would be fundamental that policies are created in a way in the EU to make it possible for Africa to trade in processed goods of its raw materials, in much the same way Europe is also trading.

If the EU would make regulations that prevented their companies to get taxes out of Africa and if the EU would deal with tax havens, our own would have no place to put the money in.

If we look at what has happened with vaccine nationalism, you can see that honestly Africa is on its own and I doubt any change is coming out of the EU. For me, the change is coming from elsewhere: is coming out of China, playing the same game and the EU discovering that unless it changes its own tools is actually going to lose on the African continent. The geopolitics are not about the fact that the EU needs to change, but the EU discovering that it desperately needs to get hold of the African continent, but is losing it to China and there is very little that they can do about it. China is doing the same thing that Europe has done for the last 60 years, but doing it at a much larger scale for the African continent. I think: between exploitation from the EU or from China, which is better? Unfortunately, China has left much more on the continent than countries as France or the UK.



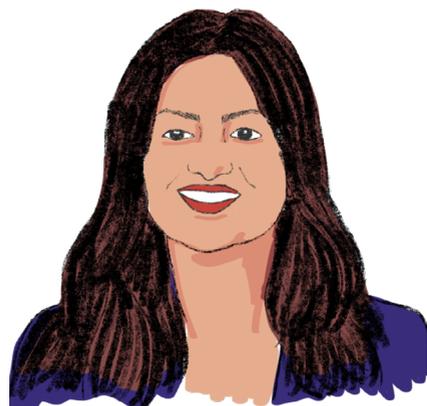
Domenico Rosa – The first aspect is the lack of industrial diversification that exists in Africa that is also related with the production of the same raw materials and because intra Africa trade is at the lowest level compared to the trade that Africa could have with other partners. So, Africa should go for industrial diversification, and the idea of boosting investment is going in this direction for creating the possibility for local production. The second aspect is to create local added value, through products creation. Lastly, the development of Africa value chain by identifying where Africa could have a competitive advantage in specific production and value chain. Regarding standards, we have in Europe, in order to protect the consumers and are applied to all countries in the world that export to Europe.

The recovery after Covid will not be easy. With the new Multiannual Financial Framework, the EU is discussing about the priorities. We have to develop an industrial sector in Africa that may compete at international level and leverage sufficient capitals in order to develop and in this case, through the guarantees system we are trying to ease the market conditions for guarantees on investment in countries where the normal market wouldn't go, because the risk is too high. This is a considerable contribution to get the recovery less uneven.

On illicit financial flows, to guarantee that the money remains where the wealth is produced, we need a better financial governance at an international level and this is something with which we are struggling. In the budget exercise we are trying to make this recovery less uneven and to relaunch the national economies and support the functioning of the states.

At vaccine level, we supported the initiative COVAX for a more equal distribution of the vaccine.

Human Rights at the core of a democratic partnership



*Moderated by
David Kode,
CIVICUS*



Marisa Matias, Member of the European Parliament (GUE/NGL)

The key narrative of this partnership is still based on leadership – there is a competition between Europe and other countries to influence Africa. This is a challenge since it's a barrier to genuine cooperation.

It is important to keep an inclusive dialogue, having the capacity to fully integrate into this dialogue different stakeholders alongside civil society organizations and other representatives. Without the dialogue is not possible to ensure the protection of human rights.

The EU needs to play better its role regarding transnational companies in Africa. We have witnessed over the last years that there are innumerable ways of exploitation that do not respect human rights and take advantage of people in vulnerable situations. There is a need to look for protection within the states and sometimes even against the states.

We raise these issues related to human right in the European Parliament, in order to make these enterprises accountable.



Salah S. Hammad, Head of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat at the African Union

The dialogue has been stronger and richer when civil society is allowed to participate. Civil society, think tanks, Academia and media are important for the dialogue. The dialogue must result in an action plan. There is more to be done to make it more open and sincere.

Both continents need to use this partnership to grow together, and to share the experiences. The partnership needs to be people-centered and inclusive thus allowing both continents to benefit from it.

What is your concern about the reversal of democratic gains and the increase of restrictions that are being implemented by the same governments who used to speak out when other countries of the world, particularly in Africa, implemented restrictive laws? And what can be done by the EU to uphold human rights in the continent?

Marisa Matias – It is quite worrying the developments across Europe when it comes to restrictions on freedom of gathering and important democratic conquests and rule of law in several countries. We are entering in a period which is really dangerous, of trying to normalize practices that are exactly the opposite of the democratic culture. There is still a lot of work to be done fighting for human rights and active dialogues with governments and NGOs around the world and pay attention to the problems human rights defenders are facing. We are seeing very worrying setbacks on human rights, freedom of speech, free press, in Europe, especially when the EU presents itself as the moral stance when it comes to human rights.

To uphold human rights in the continent, the EU should keep an inclusive dialogue and have the capacity to integrate different actors, civil society organisations for example. Building together a better future that protects human rights is important to deepen regulations of European multinationals in developing countries. There are innumerable ways of exploitation of resources that don't respect human rights and contribute to aggravate problems, increasing security and protection within the state, that act against human rights. We have been working in defining regulations for corporate responsibility and human rights responsibility where there are situations like this. We need to hold accountable all those that have economic activities in the countries and especially in exploitation situations.

How does the AU see the EU and this partnership?

Salah S. Hammad – The partnership when it started was not a partnership of equals, but within a donor/recipient relationship. But with years things are improving. Africa was looked as the backyard of Europe because of the history of colonialism, the history of poverty and conflict and other issues of the past. Addressing the issues of the past is really important to have a new beginning. One of the issues that we asked, was for Europe to address Africa as a continent, not as three regions (Mediterranean, Sub-Saharan Africa and southern Africa). We have to enter the partnership as two continents. Over the years things have improved, although the citizens in Africa are not aware. The reason is that we don't have a good communication strategy, reflecting positive results achieved in the partnership. We need a strategy that involves both citizens in Europe and Africa, in the rural areas also. The partnership has to reach all and these are issues we need to address. The partnership to be successful must be transformed to be an equal centred partnership so that people from Africa and Europe can give inputs and be involved, in particular Youth from both continents.

Africa as a young continent is the future and Europe needs this partnership as much as Africa does. There is so much that brings us together and both continents can grow up together to share experiences and human resources. The partnership needs to be a people centred partnership to ensure that it will flourish. If we keep it focused only on peace and security issues, then it will be a partnership of needs. Let us make it a partnership of inclusiveness that allows for both to benefit from it and we will ensure it will be as strategic as it can be.

Links for resources

Project's official website (in English) – <https://presidency.concordeurope.org/portugal/>

Platform's website (in Portuguese) – <https://www.plataformaongd.pt/o-nosso-trabalho/iniciativas/projeto-presidencia-do-conselho-da-ue-por-uma-europa-aberta-justa-e-sustentavel-no-mundo>

Platform's Magazine on the subject – <https://www.plataformaongd.pt/revista/english-version-what-future-for-eu-africa-relations>

Paper brief and report "European Union and Africa: Towards a 'Partnership of Equals'?"

- https://www.plataformaongd.pt/uploads/fotos_artigos/files/af_ueafrica_en-brief_maio_2021.pdf

- https://www.plataformaongd.pt/uploads/subcanais2/the_european_union_and_africa_towards_a_partnership_between-equals_englishversion.pdf

International Conference recordings in Youtube:

Part 1 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9_8jebv6Og&t=8s

Part 2 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dDOlDOjDQw>





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