

State of play of EU-Africa relations

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The Committee on Development adopted, by unanimity, the initiative report by Maria **MARTENS** (EPP-ED, NL) on the state of play of EU-Africa relations. The report deplores the fact that the 2005 EU Strategy for Africa was adopted without in-depth consultation with the AU institutions and African governments and parliaments, and without any involvement of European and African civil society and local authorities.

The report deals with the principles of the joint strategy and welcomes the Troika outline of 15 May 2007 ([joint strategy](#)) as a first joint effort towards a joint strategy. The outline lists four main objectives of the future partnership: i) the strengthening of an EU-Africa political partnership; ii) the continued promotion of peace, security, sustainable development, human rights and regional and continental integration in Africa, and to reach all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; iii) to address global challenges such as human rights, trade, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, climate change, energy security and sustainability, ICT-issues, science and technology, terrorism and WMDs; iv) a "people-centred partnership", empowering non-state actors and involving all stakeholders.

The committee welcomes the Commission's assertion that Parliament clearly has an important role to play in the process and its promise to keep Parliament regularly informed of the progress made in the preparation of the joint strategy. The committee regrets that the time-limits established by the EU Commission and Council and the AUC and AU Executive Council for the establishment and adoption of the joint strategy have led to serious limitations in the process. It notes the challenge of ensuring full participation by parliaments and emphasises that non-state actors and local authorities must as a matter of urgency be fully involved and be considered in all phases of adoption, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the joint strategy.

Increased ambitions for a closer partnership need to be accompanied by sufficient funding. It is for this reason that the committee calls on the EU to create a new programmable and predictable financial pan-African envelope from the European Development Fund (EDF), the DCI thematic instruments and the funds of the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI), in order to finance and support the implementation of this new joint strategy.

Other salient issues are as follows:

Shared principles and vision: MEPs approve the shared vision which is driven by a partnership based on mutual respect, common interest and shared purpose that commits both regions to deepening regional integration as a means of achieving economic and social development. They also share a vision of advancing democracy, good governance and human rights as universal values for promoting development. They call for an in-depth political debate to be held by the Member States and the EU institutions on the right - if not to say the duty - of intervention in the event of serious violations of IHL and/or human rights. They stress that the shared principles and vision should also include respect for the rule of law, as well as participatory democracy, pluralism and fundamental freedoms. They regret that the Commission and Council's contribution to the strategy does not endorse one of the main requests of the African side: to treat Africa as one.

Structure and priority areas for action: the report insists that fair and sustainable development and poverty eradication must be a shared commitment and the overarching objective of EU-Africa cooperation and the basis for any policy mix, and underlines the central role of the MDGs, which provide a globally agreed framework for this objective. The joint strategy must also emphasise the role of women, youth, and

civil society organisations in Africa's development processes. The Commission is asked to ensure coherence between this new strategy and the other European policies.

MEPs also highlight other essential points of this strategy:

1) Peace and security: MEPs favour a comprehensive approach to conflict and conflict situations, based on the concept of the responsibility to protect and including conflict prevention, resolution, management and reconstruction. For the committee, peace is vital as a first step towards political, economic and social development, and that sustainable and equitable economic development is an essential precondition for a lasting peace. This is why, the report calls for the implementation of existing commitments to control the arms trade. It calls for international aid for the purpose of establishing regional monitoring centres on a geographical basis, capable of detecting any deterioration of inter-ethnic, inter-religious or inter-linguistic tensions and of alerting the international community to situations in Africa which may turn violent. It calls for the enhancement of the election observation activities conducted by both the EU and the AU, as well as by other African regional bodies, and stresses the need for further cooperation among these election observation missions. It calls for the inclusion in the joint strategy of provisions to address impunity; in this regard, calls for Africa's legal and judicial systems and their democratic monitoring mechanisms to be strengthened in accordance with human rights, to enable them to try perpetrators of serious crimes against humanity in Africa itself. The work towards a UN definition for conflict resources, so as to better fight economies of war is welcomed. The report calls for conflict sensitivity to be mainstreamed in all objectives of the strategy: not only issues of peace and security, but also in trade, natural resources management, climate change and other key development issues.

2) Governance, including human rights and the rule of law, and mutual accountability: the report calls for increased support for capacity-building actions targeted at parliamentarians and civil society organisations, namely with a view to ensuring budget control and to fight corruption. It reiterates its support for the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly's (JPA) request, expressed at its 9th session in April 2005, that a suitable proportion of EDF appropriations should be used for the political education and training of parliamentarians and political, economic and social leaders, in the interests of a sustainable strengthening of good governance, the rule of law, democratic structures, and the interaction between government and opposition in pluralistic democracies based on free elections. Strengthening governance in African countries is a priority. However, governance must be improved on both sides – on the European side in particular the governance and accountability on aid commitments and better donor coordination with a view to taking greater account of the so-called 'aid orphans'. The committee expresses serious concern that the 'governance profiles' developed by the Commission for each ACP country, which will guide programming for development assistance in relation to the EUR 2.7 billion additional funds under the 10th EDF, have been prepared without any participatory element.

The report insists that, as part of the above-mentioned relations, both the EU and the African partners should recognise their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights in their international development and investment policies and practices. MEPs request that part of the EUR 55 million specifically for strengthening the PAP go towards this aim.

Lastly, the committee requests the inclusion in the joint strategy of action points in the fields of promoting the consolidation of peace and international justice and combating international crime in accordance with international law.

3) Economic growth, trade and regional integration: the report stresses that development assistance is a necessary but an insufficient condition for combating poverty. However, only equitable and sustainable long-term social and environmental development and economic growth based on decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity can allow a country to start climbing the development ladder. The committee believes that a joint EU-Africa strategy should be based on a sustainable development policy, which takes into account the real need of the African population aiming

at guaranteeing a decent income for small farmers, increasing local production, guaranteeing food security and rural livelihood, building domestic and regional markets to combat poverty in Africa.

The report deplores that -while poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDG's by 2015 rightly remain the first priority- the outline of the Troika lacks concrete proposals to promote growth through the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises and foreign direct investment, strengthened property rights, and the reduction of administrative burdens.

The liberalisation of trade is one of the most effective incentives to economic growth and to political and social progress; therefore, the committee considers it to be indispensable in reducing poverty and an important catalyst to sustainable worldwide development. It points out that Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) can become an important tool for African trade and regional integration, provided that their substance fully accords with development policy objectives, but only on condition that they are "development-friendly", allowing for exemptions and long transition periods where needed in order for domestic producers and industries to adapt to new market situations.

Further initiatives are encouraged to increase capacity building in the African agriculture sector, for example by supporting seed banks and research into crop diversification; and calls for locally value added exports to conform to 'Everything But Arms'.

The report stresses that the achievement of long-term economic growth and development necessitates a comprehensive strategy for a reversal of the ongoing depletion of Africa's natural resources. It particularly stresses the urgent need to halt ongoing deforestation and remove incentives that encourage forest destruction; in this context, calls on the EU to introduce tropical forest and land use carbon credits in the EU Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and to incentivize the regeneration of degraded ecosystems.

4) Investing in people: once again, MEPs note that Africa's priority in any partnership is focused on the socio-economic development of its people. They stress that the current international commitments to education and health for all need to be expressly integrated in the joint strategy. They note that 63% of all people in the world infected with HIV live in Africa, and that in a number of African countries average life expectancy is falling dramatically as a result of the AIDS pandemic. It is therefore necessary that universal access to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria services, in particular universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support, in Africa should be included in the joint strategy as these diseases have a massive impact on Africa's economic and social development. In this context, the report stresses that women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and pregnancy related complications resulting in high maternal and neonatal mortality. The counterfeiting of medicinal products in Africa (which mainly concerns fatal conditions such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/Aids) is a growing scourge, threatening the lives of millions of people. The report encourages the EU and the countries concerned to take action (in particular legal and penal measures) to combat that scourge. Special attention should be given to vulnerable populations, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

The committee insists that the issue of desertification and the access to water for all should be of the utmost importance in the joint strategy. It also points out that Africa is the continent predicted to suffer the effects of climate change most severely, therefore urges the EU, the AU and their Member States, as well as investors and business actors, to recognise their responsibility for climate change, and calls on them to develop an environment friendly development strategy in order to reverse the situation, including a financial framework for environmental adaptation.

The report considers that, since in a number of African countries debt is still a heavy burden counteracting any development effort, debt relief should be considered on a case-by-case base and should be conditional on strengthened governance and economic policies, on debt management and in particular on ensuring that debts are not systematically renewed by other lenders.

The report acknowledges the usefulness and the relevance of budget support, which in particular enables basic social services to be improved whilst, at the same time, helping to strengthen the structure of African countries. It calls, however, for caution on the disbursement of aid in the form of budget support. Budget support should be treated separately for each country, depending on its particular situation and that it is not appropriate for fragile States or countries in conflict. It also calls for the establishment of indicators for human and social development, for gender budgeting and for education and health. The Commission is encouraged to further elaborate its proposed “MDG contract” with the intended beneficiaries of budget support. It insists that budget support must be accompanied by the strengthening of the capacity of parliaments, national courts of auditors, local authorities and civil society. Lastly, it proposes that budget support should not replace support to certain key development sectors such as education and health or sectors that risk to be marginalised by recipient governments.

Implementation and monitoring: to ensure an effective implementation of the joint strategy, the committee requests the Commission and the general secretariat of the Council to send all further progress reports on the implementation of the EU strategy for Africa to it. It also requests information on the disbursement and implementation of the EUR 2.7 billion additional funds under the 10th EDF allocated to the ‘governance initiatives’ developed by the Commission for each ACP country as well as how the 9th EDF has been used and reprogrammed.

The Commission is asked to propose a joint mechanism for the implement and evaluation of the new joint strategy, both on a technical and political basis, including all the EC financial instruments for development at all stages. The report calls on the Commission to ensure that any monitoring framework includes the monitoring of existing commitments by the AU and EU, such as the MDGs, the above - mentioned Cotonou Agreement, the above - mentioned Abuja Call for Action, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Commission is called upon to indicate how it will finance the new strategy and its programme of action; notes that the 10th EDF, the geographical programme for South Africa and the thematic programmes of DCI, and ENPI are the only major funds available to implement the joint strategy. Coherence in the implementation of these cooperation instruments must be ensured. The report calls for the:

- first action plan to include a specific financial envelope for pan-African institutions;
- close monitoring, together with the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), the implementation of the joint strategy and the action programmes. It calls therefore for the establishment of a joint European Parliament - PAP parliamentary delegation as a forum;
- organisation, together with the PAP, of a Joint Parliamentary event preceding the second EU-Africa Summit planned for December 2007 in Lisbon.