

One year after Lisbon: the EU-Africa partnership at work

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PURPOSE: to present a Joint Africa-EU Strategy one year after in European Council summit in Lisbon in December 2007.

CONTENT: the Commission recalls that, at their second Summit in Lisbon in December 2007, the EU and African Heads of State and Government adopted a Joint Africa-EU Strategy, a policy document which marks a fundamental break with the past and provides a comprehensive framework for Africa-EU relations. This was complemented by an Action Plan for **2008-2010**, bringing concrete substance to the policies outlined in the Joint Strategy.

Consisting of 8 sectoral partnerships, the Action Plan is the main operational agenda for Africa-EU cooperation until the next Summit, which will be held in Africa in 2010. Underlining its political commitment to the process, the European Commission decided to prepare this Communication on progress and the challenges ahead.

This Communication assesses progress made during the first year of implementation; outlines the main challenges ahead, thus serving as a basis for discussion among all stakeholders; and provides input for the joint progress report for the Ministerial Troika meeting of November 2008.

The Communication provides an **overview of initial progress made on the overall political objectives** of the Joint Strategy and the implementation of the 8 partnerships. And outlines the key recommendations on how to move forward, better and faster.

It notes that 2008 has been a significant year in Africa-EU relations: long-standing cooperation has been further strengthened and important new policy initiatives have been launched. The basis for the long-term success of the Strategy is in place. Both sides have already started to implement the ambitious operational agenda of the thematic partnerships. The initial progress needs to be accelerated, broadened and consolidated.

An important next step is the establishment of the Joint Expert Groups which will implement and coordinate the 8 partnerships. This requires effective working arrangements on the African side, including a clear definition of the respective contributions, roles and responsibilities of African countries, the AUC and other pan-African bodies, the RECs and other relevant stakeholders. Parliaments, civil societies, the private sector, multilateral organisations and committed international partners need to engage in the implementation process. Last, but not least, both sides should promote greater policy coherence and complementarity between the thematic partnerships, and step up their communication and information sharing efforts, so that stakeholders, interested citizens, journalists and researchers can monitor the progress and results of this partnership.

Taking account also of the discussions during the European Commission and the AUC at their College-to-College meeting on 1 October 2008, the European Commission has identified recommendations for the way ahead, focusing on **key issues to be urgently addressed:**

(1) the partnership relies on collective efforts. Therefore, members of the Implementation Teams on both sides need to underpin their political commitment to the process with concrete contributions, including human and financial resources and technical expertise – in Brussels, Addis Ababa, and at national level;

(2) the EU Implementation Teams should finalise the comprehensive mappings of cooperation initiatives and available resources, and **develop an implementation roadmap** including priorities and early deliverables. The African side should promote African ownership of the Joint Strategy and proactive involvement in its implementation, and should speedily set up effective internal working arrangements. Experts from both sides should then jointly kick-start the implementation of the Action Plan, including agreed priority projects, before the next Ministerial Troika in November 2008;

(3) before November 2008, first consultative discussions should be held with key non-institutional actors, including civil society, academia and the private sector, to enable them to play an active role in the implementation and monitoring of the Joint Strategy;

(4) both sides should pursue efforts to "treat Africa as one" and to adapt relevant policies and legal and financial frameworks to the needs and objectives of the partnership with a view to foster continent-wide projects as well as cooperation between Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, institutional setups such as the

Africa-related working arrangements of the Council, should be further rationalised to reflect this principle;

(5) the Joint Strategy and its Action Plan were adopted by the Heads of State and Government, and must be collectively owned as whole-of-government commitments.

Coordination should be improved to reflect the Joint Strategy as a cross-cutting priority for all ministries and departments, in political as well as in financial terms;

(6) European and African actors should integrate the principles, objectives and priorities of the Joint Strategy into the programming of financial and technical cooperation, as well as into their political dialogue and meetings with third parties;

(7) European and African actors should also live up to their commitments to enhance contacts, coordination and cooperation in UN and other international bodies and multilateral negotiations, and set up efficient consultative and coordination structures;

(8) the EU should reaffirm its political and financial commitments to Africa. Despite the current difficult economic situation, the EU needs to provide half of its pledged additional ODA for 2010 and 2015 to Africa;

(9) the African side, too, needs to provide the necessary leadership in, and responsibility for, the effective delivery of its commitments and pledged contributions

to the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan;

(10) organize a structured dialogue with the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament, including regular hearings on the progress of the Strategic Partnership.

Lastly, as an overarching common element that should be integrated in all the 8 partnerships, **more emphasis should be placed on communication** – a successful and people-centred partnership requires transparency on both the achievements and challenges of the process. Process and progress should be presented in simple and accessible language on paper, through television and radio, and online.