A new EU-Africa Strategy - a partnership for sustainable and inclusive development

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The Committee on Development adopted the report by Chrysoula ZACHAROPOULOU (Renew Europe, FR) on a new EU-Africa Strategy – a partnership for sustainable and inclusive development.

Towards an improved EU-Africa strategy

Members called for a genuine partnership between equals based on international law and international conventions, agreements and standards, and urged both sides to move beyond the donor-recipient relationship. The EU's objective is to strengthen the resilience and independence of its African partners. Therefore, Members called on it to:

- coordinate with each country truly interested in a prosperous and positive long-term development of the African continent, on the basis of the full respect of human rights, media freedom and accountability, transparent and responsive governance and the fight against corruption, which are vital elements for ensuring a stable and inclusive political, social and economic environment in Africa;

- maintain flexible country-to-country and sub-regional approaches that tailor its engagement and support to the specific needs and circumstances of each country in the five regions of Africa.

Funding

The report also pointed out that the success of the partnership will depend on the funding earmarked for it. Members called for a massive support effort for Africa under the future Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), while pointing out that the EU continues to be the largest donor to Africa. They deplored the fact that many Member States have failed to reach the target of devoting 0.7 % of their gross national income to ODA and that some have even decreased their contributions to development aid.

More resources should be made available for development cooperation in the EU budget, financed by new own resources, including a financial transaction tax. Members, on the other hand, called for the development of a monitoring mechanism, as well as for full transparency and accountability of EU funding.

Partners for human and economic development

According to Members, human development should be placed at the heart of the strategy to ensure that no one is left behind, with priority given to addressing poverty, inequalities and discrimination, and ensuring democracy, the rule of law, good governance and human rights for all, paying particular attention to the most marginalised and vulnerable populations with the best interests of the child to be made a primary consideration. Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment should be prioritised and mainstreamed into the partnership.

The Commission is called on to prioritise sexual and reproductive health and rights in the new EU-Africa partnership. Priority should also be given to access to basic social services such as food, water and sanitation, to quality health systems, to quality education, to social protection and to environmental preservation.

The report also considered it fundamental to guarantee decent working conditions, strengthen social rights, improve social and labour dialogues, eradicate child labour and forced labour, and improve health and safety conditions in the workplace.

Partners for sustainable and inclusive growth

Members noted that the EU needs an entirely new foundation for its economic partnership with Africa, meaning that it needs to arrive at a new reality in which the EU and Africa develop a mutually beneficial sustainable partnership, reshaping economic, commercial and trade relations towards solidarity and cooperation, as well as ensuring fair and ethical trade.

They called for the systematic inclusion of binding and enforceable mechanisms for the implementation of Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters on human rights, labour and environmental standards in all currently negotiated and future EPAs, while stressing that the agreements need to be coherent with development policies and with the SDGs, especially with regard to their impact on deforestation, climate change and biodiversity loss.

The Commission is called on to proceed with an ambitious legislative proposal on mandatory human rights, social rights and environmental due diligence obligations for EU companies.

Members are of the view that the EU-Africa strategy should also include measures to assist African countries in converting their mineral resource wealth into real development results and called for a review of the effectiveness of existing measures, also with regard to the questionable exploitation of Africa by China and Russia.

Partners for an AU-EU green deal

Recalling that in 2019, nearly 16.6 million Africans were affected by extreme weather events, 195 % more than in 2018, Members noted the request for 45 % of the budget for the future NDICI to be devoted to climate objectives. According to Members, climate change could reverse human development and undermine low-income and fragile African countries' development prospects. They called for the swift implementation of 'green deal diplomacy' through the setting-up of a task force focusing on the external dimension of the European Green Deal.

Partners for mutually beneficial mobility and migration

Stressing that the migration issue has dominated the Africa-EU relationship, Members called for the adoption of an EU-Africa partnership on migration and mobility that puts the human dignity of refugees and migrants at its heart. They underlined the need to address through adequate funding the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacements, such as political instability, poverty, lack of security and food security, violence and the negative effects of climate change.

Lastly, the resolution called for the strengthening of efforts to trace and combat criminal networks of smugglers and seeks cooperation with African countries to combat it.