The future of EU-Africa trade relations

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution by 463 votes to 43, with 81 abstentions, on the future of EU-Africa trade relations.

Africa is a key **geographical priority** in the EU's new trade strategy. Given the importance of a strengthened dialogue between the EU and Africa, Parliament stressed that the EU should do more to ensure that the partnership goes beyond the traditional donor-recipient relationship. The Commission should **deepen and better structure its cooperation** with African partners and therefore establish a regular high-level political dialogue with a parliamentary dimension involving also the European Parliament.

Parliament stressed the importance of **creating a resilient, competitive and robust industrial base and infrastructure in Africa** with a view to developing resilient value chains and processing high value-added raw materials in Africa. In this regard, it stressed the need to help Africa adapt its own independent macroeconomic, fiscal, monetary and trade policies and called on the Commission to enable the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) countries to protect their infant industries. Environmental protection efforts should be placed at the centre of cooperation policies.

New basis for partnership

Members believe that the EU needs a whole new basis for its economic partnership with Africa, based on a level **playing field, equality, mutual respect and understanding**. This is a unique opportunity to re-launch trade relations between the two continents, to engage in a renewed, mutually beneficial and sustainable partnership based on solidarity and cooperation, and to reshape economic and trade relations with a view to empowering Africa.

The resolution stressed that the conclusions of the Sixth EU-AU Summit should be a new starting point for taking EU-Africa relations forward and called on the Commission to enter into a bilateral and structured dialogue with African partners and to pursue EU-Africa relations through regional and multilateral action.

Noting the lack of support from many African governments for the UN General Assembly resolution condemning the aggression against Ukraine, Parliament called on the Commission to investigate the various reasons for this scepticism and to intensify diplomatic efforts to reach common positions in the face of military aggression on both continents.

Parliament called on the EU to **actively support the African Continental Free Trade Area**. Among other things, it called for:

- support for a multi-stakeholder system that will allow the nations of the African Union to produce their own vaccines, which will pave the way for the development of scientific potential and reduce global dependence on a handful of corporations;

- the promotion of the development of regional value chains and better regional infrastructure in Africa;

- significant investment in transport infrastructure, connectivity and digitalisation to continue to create infrastructure for rural areas;

- engagement with African partners to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in EU-Africa trade relations;

- work with African countries to continue to facilitate and promote private investment on the continent; the EU's commitment to stimulate private sector investment to achieve the SDGs must be translated into binding human rights, social and environmental due diligence obligations.

Partnership of equals

Members consider that a new partnership of equals will best serve EU interests such as access to raw materials, shaping economic relations to promote the EU economy and managing migration, for example by addressing the root causes of problems. The EU should focus on constructive action on all aspects of migration, forced displacement and mobility, ensuring that migration takes place in a safe and well-regulated manner.

Noting the impact of COVID-19 on supply chains, the resolution stressed the importance of creating **more resilient supply chains in the post-pandemic world**, both in the EU and the African Union.

Deploring the major impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on energy, fuel, commodity and agricultural prices, Parliament called for increased action at international level to ensure that food security is at the heart of political decisions, in order to avoid shortages and ensure **food security** in the most vulnerable countries, especially on the African continent.

Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to commit to supporting African countries in implementing fair and **ambitious climate action**. The EU should deepen its economic and trade relations with Africa through investments that create decent jobs and promote human, labour and environmental rights. Parliament also suggested:

- developing an effective and easily accessible micro-credit system and, in this regard, to strengthen its capacity to support private sector development in Africa;

- increasing support to African countries and the African Union in the fight against illicit financial flows and corporate tax evasion;

- strengthening the integration of least developed countries into the international trading system;

- supporting the efforts of African partners to diversify their trade flows;

- establishing multilateral trade rules that support substantial and sustainable agriculture, based on comprehensive land reforms in various African states, in order to ensure food security throughout the continent.

Parliament stressed that the EU-Africa trade partnership must **safeguard the right of African countries to food sovereignty**, ensure respect for the principles of sustainability and should never undermine food security, safety and quality, nor promote deforestation or environmental degradation.

Members believe that imports from Africa, especially agricultural and food products, should meet EU health, safety and quality standards. They also stressed the need to help African countries reduce the use of pesticides banned in the EU by introducing alternative pest control systems.

Parliament recalled that the various EPAs should contribute to the development of intra-African integration and a fair and sustainable trade model, as well as to poverty reduction. It insisted on the right of African countries to regulate their raw materials in the public interest and called on the EU to refrain

from adopting trade measures that prohibit African countries from levying export taxes on raw materials, provided this is compatible with WTO rules.

A vocational education and training system that provides people with the skills required by the labour market is a key element of development. In this context, Members believe that cooperation between universities, research institutions and vocational education and training programmes on both continents should be strengthened.