



Declaration of the Bureau of the Section for External Relations following the debate with representatives of African civil society at the meeting of the Section for External Relations of 7 July

We reaffirm that **Africa, in all its regional and national diversity, is a continent of opportunity, innovation and partnership of equals.** Africa's young population, entrepreneurial spirit and natural resources offer major opportunities for sustainable growth. The EU is the top trading partner of African countries collectively and by far their largest export market, ahead of China, India and the United States. The EU and Africa can build mutually beneficial investment in raw materials, renewable energies, water resilience, transport and digital infrastructure, ensuring secure, trusted and reliable connectivity within and between Africa and Europe.

We recognise, at the same time, that challenges continue to affect Africa's development. Poverty, conflicts, weak governance, infrastructure gaps, illicit financial flows and high debt continue to hold back Africa's economy. Climate change, which exacerbates food insecurity and water stress, and health emergencies, including the current Ebola outbreak, also threaten sustainable development. African countries have contributed little to the climate emergency but are particularly affected by its negative impacts. Given their historical responsibility, the EU and its Member States should further support the African countries, through a genuine partnership, in order to mitigate these effects and achieve a just transition.

We acknowledge that current geopolitical tensions have exposed many African countries' vulnerability to disruptions in global food, fertiliser and energy markets.

We are deeply concerned by the many regional conflicts in Africa, rooted in historical legacies, resource competition and internal power struggles, and often fueled by non-African actors. We are particularly concerned by the devastating human impact of these conflicts, including the large number of internally displaced persons and refugees on the continent, creating significant humanitarian, social and economic challenges.

We are concerned by intensifying power struggles in a multipolar world, partly driven by **Africa's abundance of the critical raw materials** needed for the digital and green transitions. We stress the need **to build mutually beneficial partnerships** that support sustainable extraction, production and trade, as well as Africa's development priorities and global sustainability goals. We invite the European Union to step up the fight against disinformation and foreign manipulation, in cooperation with the African partners, and to effectively counter the anti-EU narratives.

We call on the European Union to set a positive example and promote fair and responsible trade and investment agreements. The EU-Africa partnership should be based on mutual respect, shared interests and co-ownership. Frameworks such as **the Global Gateway** should reflect African priorities and support Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, with the EU contributing through institution-building, knowledge transfer, high standards and long-term capacity development. The Global Gateway initiative should have adequate economic, social and environmental standards, promote public participation and transparency, and respond to local needs.

We underline the need to **unlock Africa's investment potential through stronger institutions, better infrastructure, water resilience, skills, access to finance, SME support and deeper regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).** Stronger focus should be placed on water security, which directly affects agriculture, industry, energy production, women's empowerment and overall social development.

We further underline that **Africa's voice and representation in global governance and multilateral decision-making** should be strengthened.

We call for fair EU migration policies that are guided by solidarity, show full respect for human rights, the rule of law and legal safeguards, and are fully consistent with all binding international and EU legal frameworks, including Article 2 TEU, Articles 79 and 80 TFEU, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We are deeply worried about the continually shrinking civic space in many African countries. Restrictions on freedom of speech, freedom of association and peaceful assembly continue to constrain the work of civil society organisations, trade unions, human rights defenders and independent media. The EU should address this in political dialogue and support the social partners and civil society organisations as key actors in democratic governance, economic transformation and peacebuilding. Democracy, the rule of law, labour rights and social dialogue are essential to sustainable development.

We point to the importance of the **meaningful participation of organised civil society in the EU-Africa partnership** and call for permanent, structured participation mechanisms under both this partnership and the Samoa Agreement with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States. Together with the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union, we stand ready to support their establishment and implementation.