



European Economic and Social Committee



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE

AFRICA-EU ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STAKEHOLDERS' NETWORK

17 July 2018, Brussels – Belgium

FINAL DECLARATION

The representatives of African and EU economic and social stakeholders

1. On the role of civil society in Africa-EU relations:

- 1.1 consider it essential for civil society, including economic and social stakeholders, to make a regular, structured contribution to the EU-Africa strategy, and stress the need for them to take part in the proper platforms for addressing recommendations to political bodies with the aim of ensuring good governance and citizen participation;
- 1.2 reaffirm the need to involve, through regular consultations, the economic and social partners in the preparation, monitoring and assessment of development programmes and in the management of migration policies;
- 1.3 strongly believe that economic and social stakeholders should be consulted and involved systemically in EU-African national and regional Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) so that civil society is actively involved in drawing up, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the agreements.

2. On the 2018-2020 Action Plan:

- 2.1 recognise the importance of the AU-EU Action Plans which have consolidated and deepened relations between the two continents since 2007, tackling the challenges of peace and security, democracy, governance and human rights, human development, economic, sustainable and inclusive development, continental integration, global and emerging issues such as migration, mobility and employment and growth;
- 2.2 call for the finalisation of the new *2018-2020 Action Plan*, as an opportunity for African and European leaders to lay down strategic guidelines to respond to political, socio-economic and

environmental challenges and give fresh impetus to the Africa-EU partnership, and to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

- 2.3 stress that the implementation of the *2018-2020 Action Plan* should ensure more stability and predictability in Africa-EU economic relations with the aim of fostering good governance and better functioning of the rule of law;
- 2.4 call for the *2018-2020 Action Plan* to include a robust chapter on the consultation of and structured dialogue with economic and social actors on both continents, so that ownership of the plan by those actors can be achieved.

3. **On the state of the EU External Investment Plan (EIP)**

- 3.1 call for the implementation of the *External Investment Plan*, adopted in September 2017 and agreed at the EU-Africa Summit in Abidjan in November 2017, which will facilitate the mobilisation of private investments in Africa;
- 3.2 stress that the EIP should ensure accountability by beneficiaries through democratic participation, for the benefit of the communities;
- 3.3 reaffirm the need to promote the principles and standards of decent work as well as the effective implementation of the ILO's fundamental conventions;
- 3.4 ask EU delegations in the African countries to identify the economic and social actors, including cooperatives and NGOs, that are likely to benefit from the EIP;
- 3.5 believe that the implementation of the *External Investment Plan* will tackle some of the root causes of migration and capital flight, by encouraging investment projects in the partner countries and responding in part to the issue of young Africans who are lacking prospects.

4. **On African youth, as a driver of economic development:**

- 4.1 point out the high level of unemployment in North Africa driven by very high rates among young people and women, as well as the pressure exerted by population growth on unemployment and poor-quality employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, as described in the ILO's "World employment social outlook, trends 2018";
- 4.2 point out that Africa is the continent with the youngest population; in this sense, the difficulties encountered by this major population group in the search for decent jobs are potential sources of social and political instability;
- 4.3 reiterate the importance of giving special attention to the aspirations and concerns of young people in Africa-EU relations, and stress the need for them to take part in the proper platforms addressing recommendations to political bodies;

- 4.4 support the declaration of participants at the 5th Youth Conference, organised in the framework of the 35th session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and recommending that ACP states create, with the help of the EU, an enabling environment for small and medium enterprises in the ACP by drawing up a "Marshall Plan" for the ACP countries and promoting the exchange of talents and best practices, in particular between the EU and Africa;
- 4.5 recognise the key role of the agriculture and agri-food sectors in transforming Africa, and call on the governments of the EU and Africa to consider it essential, in the long term, to encourage measures coupling vocational training schemes with measures to support the professional integration of young people;
- 4.6 point out that Africa and the EU share the same challenges concerning education and vocational training, which are essential for their prosperity and contribute to ensuring the conditions necessary for decent work;
- 4.7 recognise the dynamism and the role played by African young people in transforming Africa through new projects, in particular in high-value agri-food sector chains and information and communications technology (ICT);
- 4.8 reiterate that improving the business climate involves not only facilitating access to financing for young people, but also facilitating, in administrative terms, their opportunities to pursue self-employment and set up small and medium-sized enterprises in the formal sector;
- 4.9 strongly recommend a real policy for formalising the informal sector, including incentives and follow-up;
- 4.10 call for better access to financing for micro-enterprises, cooperatives, small traders and family businesses, and, in particular, for businesses set up by women or young people, which have the greatest potential for growth and job creation in African countries;
- 4.11 strongly recommends that governments in EU and African countries recognise and give equivalence to diplomas, degrees, credits and expertise acquired on the two continents;
- 4.12 call on African and EU institutions to offer financial support for employment creation and youth insertion in Africa, in particular through local projects developed by economic and social actors;
- 4.13 call for specific vocational training programmes aimed at young farmers to be stepped up as part of integrated rural development policies, and for training and exchange programmes to be set up for young African and European farmers; stress the need for young farmers' organisations to be more involved in the agri-food sector with a view to increasing their skills.

5. **With regard to migration:**

- 5.1 welcome the work launched with a view to finalising the *Global Compact on Migration*;

- 5.2 stress the key role of migrants as net contributors to economic, social and cultural development for both destination countries and countries of origin;
 - 5.3 highlight the reality of African migration flows, which are primarily intra-regional;
 - 5.4 reiterate the importance of integrating immigrants, going far beyond the demographic, economic or fiscal perspectives, through appropriate pre-departure and pre-arrival integration measures, vocational training, increasing synergies with the labour market, and boosting labour mobility and circular migration, while facilitating access to basic social services and mutual recognition of acquired social security rights;
 - 5.5 support all African Union and European Union measures fostering free movement of goods and persons and protection of workers' rights in the two continents;
 - 5.6 reaffirm the need for EU and AU countries to cooperate on legal migration and mobility by promoting a common migration policy that is consistent, respects human rights and is based on a spirit of solidarity and cooperation with the countries of origin;
 - 5.7 support an approach that facilitates the recognition and accreditation of the skills and qualifications of migrant workers and which takes into account the need of both sides, in particular the development of the countries of origin, with due respect to the principle of equal opportunities for all.
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