



European Economic and Social Committee



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE

AFRICA-EU ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STAKEHOLDERS' NETWORK

3-4 July 2019, 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 point out that the EU-Africa strategic partnership and its four strategic areas (economic opportunities for youth, peace and security, mobility and migration, cooperation on governance) adopted at the fifth African Union-European Union summit of 29 and 30 November 2017 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, are essential for civil society, including economic and social stakeholders;
- 1.2 consider it essential for civil society, including economic and social stakeholders, to make a regular, structured contribution to each of these four strategic areas, and stress the need for them to take part in the platforms for addressing recommendations to political bodies with the aim of ensuring good governance and citizen participation;
- 1.3 call for capacity building programmes, enabling and supporting an efficient participation of recognised employers and workers' organisations as well as other civil society actors to EU-Africa negotiations;
- 1.4 consider the negotiations on a renewed ACP-EU Partnership Agreement as an opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of economic and social stakeholders and more largely civil society organisations (CSOs), and include economic and social stakeholders in the partnership, by reinforcing their mandate in the future framework, while deepening its regional pillars, including Africa;
- 1.5 reiterate the importance of non-state actors from all the parties participating from the beginning in the negotiation, implementation and monitoring of any agreements between the ACP and the EU;

1.6 that it is important for any recognition of the EU-ACP Partnership Agreement must genuinely embrace the details of multilateral agreements and seek to preserve policy intervention spaces for Africa;

2. **On the EU-Africa investment mechanisms**

2.1 believe that all investments have an impact on the communities and regions of Africa, and should be designed to mitigate detrimental social, environmental and economic impacts with a view to achieving an equal and strategic partnership between the EU and Africa as well as creating jobs, raising living standards and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

2.2 stress that African states must also provide investors and SMEs with guarantees so as to support their initiatives;

2.3 stress the need to involve the economic and social partners, through regular consultations, in the preparation, monitoring and assessment of investment initiatives towards Africa, in any plan using public money to lower the risk of investing;

2.4 reiterate their strong interest in the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investments and Jobs presented on 12 December 2018 by the president of the European Commission in his "State of the Union" address, which aims to leverage EUR 44 billion of private investment;

2.5 maintain their call for the implementation of the External Investment Plan (EIP), 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;

2.6 stress, again, that the EIP should ensure accountability by beneficiaries through democratic participation, for the benefit of the communities and insist on the need to promote the principles and standards for level-playing field project development, across Africa, to foster industrialisation while attracting investments;

2.7 still believe that the implementation of the EIP 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;

2.8 point out, firstly, that EU trust funds were originally established in 2013 for humanitarian support for countries in the Sahel and Lake Chad region, and secondly, the decision of the 2015 Valletta summit, leading European and African heads of state and government to use the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) as a temporary emergency response to migration;

2.9 express, however, discomfort with the externalisation of EU migration policy to African partners and point out that they consider migration to be a human phenomenon which has always been a factor for economic, social and cultural progress, especially for host countries but also for countries of origin;

- 2.10 note that the EUTF is becoming a regular instrument mobilised in African countries of origin, transit and destination;
 - 2.11 acknowledge and note with interest the contribution of the EUTF to improving employability, in particular through vocational training, capacity building and the strengthening of micro, small and medium size enterprises (MSMEs) as well as cooperatives;
 - 2.12 call for better management of, and easier access to the EUTF for the benefit of the local economic and social actors of Africa, especially through training and capacity building tailored for economic and social actors;
 - 2.13 acknowledge the initiatives of and role played by African and EU economic and social actors in fundraising and development activities, and believe that capacity-building and project management should first and foremost support African actors involved in these activities;
 - 2.14 call for the EU to commit to meeting with 0.7% GDP contribution to Aid Development so as to support the implementation of the 2015 Addis Ababa action agenda of development financing;
 - 2.15 ask EU delegations within African countries to identify the economic and social actors to be engaged in the political dialogue for the creation of an inclusive and transparent investment environment as well as those that are likely to benefit from the EIP, given their key role in creating socio-economic impact at multiple levels, especially within local communities;
 - 2.16 ask EU delegations and EU and Member State public financial institutions present in African countries to put at the disposal of SMEs, in particular, information mechanisms for potential investors regarding EU investment guarantees and funds;
 - 2.17 ask EU delegations and EU Member States to grant technical assistance to economic and social actors, including cooperatives and NGOs, that are likely to benefit from any EU investment support, in particular when it comes to small projects, and draw attention to the value of micro-credit projects in these countries;
3. **On the importance of infrastructure as a factor of progress**
- 3.1 recognise the diversity of African countries in term of geography, economy and culture and their need for infrastructure in the areas of health, education, agriculture, energy, water and sanitation, transport and digital;
 - 3.2 stress the essential contribution of women, youth and farmers to innovation, including in the sectors ensuring communities' food security and call for equal access to decision and funding mechanisms;
 - 3.3 acknowledge the initiatives of and role played by African and EU economic and social actors in the fundraising for and developing of infrastructure and believe that capacity-building and project management should primarily support African actors involved at community level;

- 3.4 stress the continent's need to interconnect structures in the fields of transport, energy and information technologies, and is calling for synergies between EU initiatives fostering investments in Africa and the Connecting Europe Facility after 2020, the EU funding instrument promoting growth, jobs and competitiveness through targeted infrastructure investment at European level in the fields of transport, energy and digital;
- 3.5 stress that there is a considerable need for public and private investment in order to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and that blended finance should always support projects aimed at achieving sustainable growth and reducing poverty;
- 3.6 ask the EU to dedicate real and sustained commitment to the Erasmus Plus Programme so that more African youths are given more opportunities to study abroad and assisted to return and to contribute their knowledge to the innovation and invention needs of Africa;

4. On the impact of investing in the private sector

- 4.1 consider as a milestone the entry into force on 29 May 2019 and the launching on 7 July 2019 of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which aims to be the largest free trade area in the world, and call for explicit references and provisions regarding the role of non-state actors in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agreements involving this free trade area, which is set to be officially launched;
- 4.2 highlight the need of any investor, African or European, small or medium, for basic and transparent information on the economic and legal environment in the investing country and welcome the policy briefs and economy reports issued by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), which help to make investors more familiar with investing countries;
- 4.3 stress the importance of supporting, in particular, small and medium entrepreneurs and of enabling economies to grow, through financial guarantees and blending instruments;
- 4.4 support the micro-credit initiatives mechanism, as a development mechanism for MSMEs, especially in rural areas and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS);

5. On the impact of investing in the social and environmental sectors

- 5.1 stress that investing in education and vocational training must be a priority, because it is essential for the achievement of the other SDGs: for economic development and reducing inequalities, for gender equality, for ensuring girls and women become self-sufficient, for the social inclusion of persons with a disability, for enhancing awareness of environmental protection;
- 5.2 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 and social dialogue, as defined by the ILO;

- 5.3 recommend, again, that governments in EU and African countries recognise and give equivalence to diplomas, degrees, academic credits and expertise, but also skills, acquired on the two continents, and the promotion of norms against violence at work, such as the ILO Convention adopted June 2019, "Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work".
- 5.4 join together in marking the ILO's 100th anniversary and stress the need to promote the principles and standards of decent work as well as the effective implementation of the ILO's eight fundamental conventions and compliance with internationally recognised human rights principles;
- 5.5 strongly believe that EU investments should bring added value in Africa and not exploit cheap labour and raw materials and stress that EU and African investors should ensure the accountability of beneficiaries through democratic participation and social dialogue for the benefit of communities;
- 5.6 stress that raw materials and agricultural commodities are key natural resources in Africa;
- 5.7 call for investments upstream and downstream in the extraction activities' value chain, in particular in the primary sector of the economy, with the aim of ensuring the necessary added value, which will ultimately contribute to a decent level of living standards and quality of life for African people;
- 5.8 stress the particular situation of coastal African countries, where women need access to funding as they create jobs, and innovate in the sustainable management of fisheries resources and the food security of local communities, despite working in the most difficult conditions (no access to water, no access to electricity, precarious health);
- 5.9 in the perspective of sustainable development, highlight the importance to invest in strengthening the cross-border governance of natural resources at the scale at river basin organisations (Niger, Senegal, Volta, Congo, etc.) level, as well as in the conservation and restauration of natural infrastructures, such as wetlands;
- 5.10 insist on the need to fight against biodiversity loss, land degradation and desertification using appropriate funding mechanisms, in particular the Green Climate Fund, which is the operating mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Financing for Development mechanism, which serves the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- 5.11 stress, in this regard, the paramount importance of investments in the conservation of Africa's numerous wetland areas and Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs), which are being developed in the continent in both land and marine environments, where shared natural resources are sustainably co-managed and conserved to foster socio-economic development and regional integration for the benefit of people living within and around those areas.

