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Looking Beyond 2013: Are Africa-EU Relations Still Fit for Purpose?

Brussels, 28 October 2013



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Introduction

Meeting in Lisbon in 2007, European and African leaders resolved to “build a new strategic political partnership for the future, overcoming the traditional donor-recipient relationship and building on common values and goals”.¹ This commitment was made against the backdrop of changing geopolitical, institutional and economic contexts in both Europe and Africa. In an attempt to give life to an ambitious political program, they launched a new partnership framework, the Joint EU-Africa Strategy (JAES), which was implemented through successive Action Plans organized around eight thematic partnerships. Although this new strategy was conceived as a comprehensive framework for European engagement with the African continent, the JAES continues to co-exist alongside other frameworks such as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement as well as thematic dialogue forums around specific issues such as peace and security.

Six years after Lisbon, familiar concerns continue to be raised regarding the nature of EU-Africa relations – these include relatively weak political leadership to achieve more tangible results on both sides, financial constraints to implement commitments of the Strategy and conflicting interests despite common agreed values and objectives. Assessments on whether a ‘new strategic political partnership’ has hatched are mixed at best. The EU has repeatedly argued for a stronger focus on ‘shared priorities’ and results while for African actors there is a sense that ‘more needs to be done’ to forge a truly new partnership.

The context of the partnership has evolved further since 2007, making it even more urgent for both partners to clearly define the added value of their partnership at a time when the needs, priorities and interests of the partners are shifting, foreign policies are under pressure to support the domestic agendas of multiple stakeholders, global challenges are multiplying and becoming even more urgent and opportunities for new forms of partnerships are expanding. In light of this changing context, this conference looks into **what needs to be done to ensure that Europe-Africa relations remain fit for purpose**. The EU-Africa Summit in Spring 2014 provides an opportunity to take stock of the successes, challenges and failures of the efforts to launch a strategic partnership, to revisit strategic questions on the nature and objective of the partnership and to have an open debate on what both partners expect from one another in order to inform the future relationship.

In this context, the European Think Tank Group (ETTG)² is organising a Conference on 28th October in Brussels to provide a **platform** for policy makers and stakeholders to have a frank discussion on key strategic and thematic questions concerning the future of the **EU-Africa partnership** in order to contribute to the process leading up to the next EU-Africa Summit, due to be held in Brussels in April 2014.

¹ Lisbon Declaration, June 2008, pg 9-10

² The European Think Tank Group (ETTG) is a grouping of four EU-based Think Tanks; namely the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), the Fundacion par alas Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo (FRIDE), the German Development Institute (DIE) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).



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Objectives of the conference

The conference will address both strategic and thematic questions. Four vital areas for future EU-Africa dialogue and relations will be explored. African Private Sector Development, Governance, Food Security and Dialogue on Peace and Security challenges. More specifically, the conference will focus on the following questions:

1. What have been the successes and challenges with the EU-Africa partnership since its creation at the Lisbon Summit in 2007?
2. What are the interests at stake for both continents in renewing the partnership?
3. What are the burning issues both continents would like to prioritise and cooperate on going forward?
4. What is needed to ensure that the partnership is fit-for-purpose in a changing global landscape to respond to the priorities, needs and ambitions of both partners?

Main themes

Strategic challenges

On the whole, Africa is experiencing a surge of economic dynamism and assertiveness as an international actor. Despite persisting challenges in the area of governance, positive trends have been recorded making the continent better governed.³ Yet a number of challenges continue to face the continent, including the transformation of economic growth into social benefits for the population. At the same time, EU geo-political and economic weight on the global scene seems on the wane as a result of the Eurozone crisis, austerity and pressures for protectionism.

African leaders are seeking a relationship on an equal footing with the EU, different from the donor-recipient relationship that has prevailed so far. Similarly, Europe wants to maintain a privileged partnership with Africa beyond an aid context. The EU-Africa summit will take place against this backdrop, with both actors voicing the need for a truly political relationship. Crucially, taking EU-Africa relations to a higher level entails a change of approach on both sides. Our proposition is that the EU and Africa will need to innovate and redesign their relationship around a number of issues of significant interest to both parties. We suggest that these include private sector development, good governance, peace and security and food security.

³ Mo Ibrahim Index 2013. "94% of people living in Africa live in a country which has shown overall Governance improvements since 2000", <http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/news/article.php?id=55>.



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Four vital areas for future EU-Africa relations

There are four issues that are expected to remain high, or gain significance, on the EU-Africa agenda: the role of private sector for development; good governance; peace and security; and food security. The four issues represent some of the common 'platforms' that are of interest to both continents, but have not been sufficiently explored so far. The challenge is to transform what are now issues of common concern into effective partnerships reflecting converging interests.

a. Supporting the Development of the African Private Sector

The development of a strong indigenous Africa private sector is increasingly gaining momentum in African development debates and African institutions are increasingly aware of its crucial role for continental development.⁴ On the donor side, decreasing levels of ODA impose a shift of focus towards more involvement of private actors as drivers of development and economic transformation. These trends were confirmed with the 2010 Tunis Declaration on aid effectiveness⁵ and more recently, at the Busan High Level Meeting on Aid Effectiveness⁶. They are also reflected in the flagship European Agenda for Change.

Despite the 'political capital' that the cause of private sector development has gained in Africa, African firms still struggle to make their way on domestic and global markets and establish themselves as competitive actors internationally.⁷ But as the global integration process continues and in spite of the many setbacks caused by the financial and economic crisis, opportunities for African companies to play a greater role are ever increasing. Over the last few decades, many African states have undertaken reforms that have positively altered the market and business environment, giving them greater macroeconomic and political stability; in turn incentivizing increased domestic and foreign⁸ investments.

The abundance of natural resources, growing middle classes and an increasing pool of skilled and educated citizens provides solid bedrock for African companies to enter into the global marketplace. The question then arises on how to support African companies to fare better domestically as well as how to also encourage them to link up to national, regional and global value chains. As countries remove barriers to capital flows and improve their business climate, it is important to zoom into what may be preventing African companies to grow bigger within their own countries and outside their borders and hence tap opportunities in the global market.

Today, one of the major issues holding African firms back is their small size. According to the World Bank (2012), Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) dominate African economies and account for around 90% of firms in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, of the large firms operating in Africa, around 35% are foreign owned, compared to around 25% in East Asia, 5% in South Asia and 20% in Latin America (World Bank, 2012).

⁴ See African Development Report 2011, summarized here: <http://www.afdb.org/en/annual-meetings/about-us/2012-annual-meetings/programme/launch-of-the-2011-african-development-report/>

⁵ http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhlf4/images/stories/hlf4/Tunis_Consensus.pdf

⁶ For more information, see: <http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhlf4/en/topics/building-blocks/555.html>

⁷ As an instance, no African multinational features in CNN-Fortune global ranking of 500 top companies by total revenue http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/2012/full_list/

⁸ Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Africa is rising. Between 2003 and 2008, inflows quadrupled (AfDB, 2013) and more recent data on greenfield investments suggests that between 2010 and 2011, FDI to the region rose by 40%, with some of the biggest increases in Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa (FT, 2012). Although highly concentrated in few countries and few sectors, these increases in FDI inflows to the continent are an encouraging sign of improved business environment.



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Whilst some African SMEs have managed to compete at the global level, in most cases they are generally too small to effectively compete internationally. SMEs in Africa are further challenged by additional constraints, namely:

1. **A weak institutional and regulatory environment**, that is growth enhancing and business-friendly.
2. **Insufficient hard and soft infrastructure** including inland and maritime transport, electricity, logistics, telecommunications and trade-facilitation services, to name but a few;
3. **Lack of access to finance**⁹, limiting access to those who need to acquire start-up capital or expand existing operations. Banks often regard SMEs as high-risk borrowers and generally charge higher interest rates¹⁰ or require larger collateral for the provision of loans, leaving many SMEs unable to access finance. In this context, the only way most SMEs can build up expansion capital is to save a part of their revenues or rely on risk and uncertain informal loans (Kauffmann, 2005).
4. **Lack of support** to build capacity of small firms to formulate business plan, enhance their marketing skills and provide other non-financial support services to enterprise development.
5. **Institutional issues** – such as corruption and the high level of taxes – and the practices employed by their non-regulated (or informal) competitors.
6. **Labour skills & trade regulations** seem to be less of an issue for smaller enterprises than for medium-sized firms, however they are still an issue for around a quarter of all small firms.

Many European countries have, over time, overcome the challenges outlined above. Hence there is scope to share some successful experience and initiatives¹¹ with African counterparts, notably in terms of promoting SME access to finance. These could be shared with various regional economic communities in Africa, as well as with regional institutions such as the African Development Bank.

In addition, there are also a number of regulatory measures that the EU is implementing in order to improve SME access to capital markets, such as improvements in the visibility of SMEs within the EU market¹². The EU also closely monitors the SME lending situation, helping them to identify SMEs' current financing needs and subsequently adjusting financial institution capital requirements earmarked for SME loans.

In a broader context, it is important to see how the EU-Africa partnership will be able to support the African private sector to play a central role in structural transformation of African economies. In particular, how will the 'Agenda for Change' affect (if it can do so) future support to African private sector development?

⁹ This is estimated to be a major constraint for growth for 47% of small and 41% of medium-sized firms in Sub-Saharan Africa.

¹⁰ For example, interest rates for SMEs in Malawi range from 15% to 25% on loans. These rates are unsustainable for most of the SMEs within the country.

¹¹ Examples include, amongst others, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, a three-part programme that aims to foster innovation, improve energy efficiency and support the uptake of Information and Communication Technologies in European SMEs; the EUREKA network, which creates links between European SMEs and Research and Development organisations; the JEREMIE programme, which allows EU Member States to use a proportion of their structural funds (through a holding fund) to provide equity, loans and guarantees to provide finance for SMEs; and the high growth and innovative SME facility (GIF), that contributes to the establishment and financing of SMEs through the provision of risk capital for innovative SMEs.

¹² These include making more information available on the role, health and needs of SMEs in the EU, as well as the opportunities and challenges they face.



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In order to understand the nexus between African enterprises, the financial sector and the potential role of the EU, the session aims to bring together three panellists to share their views around the following questions and sharing of experiences:

1. What are the key challenges of opportunities that arise for African private sector in a journey from SME to successful large enterprise development?
2. What practical experience that could potentially be useful to address challenges facing the African financial sector and related institutions?
3. Is Europe's experience fit for Africa? What do African private sector expect from European private sector?

b. Governance and EU political conditionality in Africa

The promotion and support of good governance, democracy and respect for human rights is a fundamental principle and key objective of EU-Africa relations. The use of both negative and positive political conditionality has long been an important instrument in pursuing these objectives. Not only does the EU provide an increasing volume of aid to support governance reforms, it has also started to put a stronger emphasis on incentive-based approaches to reward partner countries for reform efforts and to foster engagement with the EU in a comprehensive political dialogue¹³.

Despite these efforts, the EU's approach towards supporting good governance in Africa has often proven a challenge. The use of '*positive conditionality*' to incentivise political reforms has fallen short of expectations, both in the Governance Incentive Tranche applied in ACP countries and in the EU's Neighbourhood policy. Moreover, the EU's application of '*negative conditionality*', through aid cuts or foreign policy sanctions has proven inconsistent, with North Africa largely spared from restrictive measures and the EU blamed for stabilising authoritarian regimes.

In addition, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy's attempt to upgrade and intensify political dialogue has delivered only modest results and suffered from a lack of political leadership on both sides. It is now an important time for Europe and Africa to rethink how governance issues should feature in their future relationship.

Recent events, in particular the Arab spring, have rekindled the discussion on how to support good governance and democracy, how to modify existing instruments and strategies and how to better link EU approaches to local contexts and dynamics. The new programmatic orientation of the EU in the neighbourhood and in its development policy strongly emphasise the use of political conditionality, with 'more for more' becoming the buzz-word to incentivise political reform in the EU's neighbourhood and political conditionalities tied more strongly to the provision of EU budget support. These new strategies are also backed up by public opinion polls in Europe, which indicate an overwhelming support for political conditionalities. But how adequate are these new strategies and types of conditionalities to African realities, what appetite is there from support-receiving countries to embrace them and how ready and capable is the EU to enforce its own conditions?

In fact, the EU's response to the Arab spring highlights the challenges the EU faces in using conditionalities to promote democracy. Recognising the flaws in its previous "stability logic" in relation to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the EU made important commitments to move towards supporting "deep democracy", including by streamlining conditionality on the principle of 'more for more'.

¹³ The 'Governance Initiative' with ACP countries in 2006 and the subsequent launch of the Governance Incentive Tranche and the 'Governance Facility' with the European Neighbourhood for the 2007-2010 period are two key examples.


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However, member states' lack of commitment to deliver on the key incentives that underlie these conditionality-based policies, as well as the continuity in Europe's relations with less democratic regimes such as Morocco and Algeria, mean that these new commitments to support "deep democracy" have not translated into action.

On a theoretical and empirical basis, there is a substantial agreement regarding the circumstances required for conditionality to be effective: conditionalities must provide a significant incentive to outweigh domestic political costs, they have to be credible and well-coordinated and they need to coincide with domestic dynamics and provide support to reform-oriented groups both within and outside of the government. Most importantly, on the African side, there needs to be political buy-in to implement those reforms. In reality, however, these conditions are difficult to achieve. In its aid policy, the EU has a particularly poor track record when it comes to coherent and concerted action and to providing well-coordinated incentives to African partner countries. In strategically important African contexts, EU's own member states frequently prioritise national strategic interests over coordinated European efforts to promote improved governance. Recent fragmented EU responses to governance-related crisis and change in North Africa and the Sahel suggest that such trends may increase.

As aid becomes increasingly marginal within the EU-Africa relationship, the EU will need to become more adept to using policy coherence to promote improved governance. Existing commitments to policy coherence for development need to be effectively implemented. They also need to be broadened out to take account of the potential governance and democracy impacts of a wide range of EU external and internal policy areas. So far, the EU's efforts to support democratisation have often been trumped by other interests, such as economic, foreign policy or security goals. Likewise there have been trade-offs between economic development objectives such as poverty reduction or economic liberalisation and democracy and human rights goals. Without a significant strengthening and broadening of EU policy coherence agendas, such trade-offs are likely to continue, thus continuously downsizing the impact of support to governance.

In the context of austerity, there is increasing pressure on the EU to ensure that its aid to Africa involves governance conditionalities. At the same time, the EU is seeking a comprehensive and reciprocal partnership with Africa that embraces a broad range of agendas. This raises a dilemma of whether the imposition of governance conditionalities runs counter to the idea of a partnership among equals, and the eye-to-eye-level that is emphasised in the JAES, as well as in the commitment to national ownership within global development agendas.

Moreover, the EU's increased orientation towards conditionalities has largely been negotiated in Brussels and other European capitals: this does not represent a 'joint' approach. So far, too little attention has been paid to Africa's interests, perceptions and responses to the re-strengthened emphasis on governance and political conditionality the EU aims to apply in their relations. Do African countries accept such an approach? Does the EU provide the right incentives to generate domestic African (government and non-government) support for necessary political reforms? What legitimate power does the EU have to 'impose' conditionalities in its future relations with Africa, given its reducing aid, political and economic influence on the continent?

The EU faces a number of challenges in tailoring its policies towards the domestic context of African political regimes. On the one hand, the EU needs to find effective ways to support African governments and domestic change agents in countries that strive for democratic consolidation. On the other, the EU needs to find the right approach in engaging with countries that are slowing down or reversing their efforts towards political liberalisation and who are closing down spaces for democratic participation.



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Is the application of (negative) conditionality and an increased focus on support to civil society organisations a viable solution in such situations? How, and if at all, should the EU cooperate with authoritarian regimes in Africa? Especially in development-oriented autocratic countries, the EU has and will continue to face significant trade-offs between the development and the democracy agenda, since restrictive measures in the form of aid or foreign policy sanctions are likely to have a negative effect on a country's socio-economic development. What is the view of African and European stakeholders on how to best manage such situations and what could a potentially 'joint' approach look like?

Any discussion on these issues obviously needs to take place against the background of the changing context for EU-Africa relations. Many African countries have generated impressive economic growth and reduced their dependence on foreign aid, including European aid. Increasing South-South cooperation with emerging economies such as China, India, Brazil, Turkey and Arab donors are providing Africa with new sources of investment and trade opportunities, thereby increasing choice for African states and reducing EU influence. Receiving countries are therefore increasingly able to choosing their engagements according to what fits best their national interests. Africa is also rethinking its approach with its different partners, as the latter become increasingly important political, trade and development actors in Africa. Their foreign policy agendas – including strong emphasis on non-conditionality and national ownership - will inevitably rebalance the strength of the geo-political engagement of EU in Africa.

It is exactly in this changing context that the EU and Africa need to work out the future direction for cooperation on democracy and governance. To remain **relevant**, on its side, the EU must examine how it can balance its interests and the need to remain an important political, trade and development partner in Africa, while at the same time remaining faithful to its values and commitments to promote democratic values, including through conditionalities. To remain **efficient**, it must ensure that the design of its policies is informed by the political buy-in of African stakeholders. Finally, it must understand how different African stakeholders envisage its future role in the area of governance.

To guide the discussions, panelists would be asked to share their views on the following questions:

1. What lessons can be drawn from previous EU experiences of governance support in Africa?
2. How do African actors perceive the EU's push for stronger political conditionalities? Does the EU provide the right incentives to generate domestic African (government and non-government) support for political reforms?
3. How will the EU's reducing aid and trade influence in Africa impact its ability to promote a governance agenda on the continent, including through political conditionalities?

c. Food Security

Despite steady economic growth, much of Africa still faces challenges in achieving food (and nutrition) security. This holds particular relevance for Sub-Saharan Africa, where hunger affects nearly a quarter of the populace and the prevalence of malnutrition is even more widespread. Food insecurity is a multidimensional problem. Its diverse sources include environmental pressures and underinvestment in agricultural inputs and infrastructure that limit agricultural production; poverty and lack of political will and capacities that limit access to food; deficits in market development that lower incentives for food production in rural areas and hinder a better distribution of available food products; and the persistence of political and economic instability that weakens all pillars of food security.


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At the same time, world food prices have increased and become more volatile - a situation that will continue given that most underlying factors such as growth of demand, high energy prices and climate change are likely to intensify.

In order to make its growing population food-secure, Africa needs to enhance its agricultural productivity and improve access to food. Yet, the track record of past efforts is rather weak, with some exceptions, but clearly below the MDG targets. In recognition of this reality, several African-driven initiatives on food security have been launched. 2013 marks the 10th anniversary of CAADP, Africa's comprehensive agricultural program, designed to mobilise additional funding to support improvements in land and water management, market access, food production, and agricultural research from African governments and international partners. The issue of agriculture and food security is also an area of cooperation under the Joint Africa EU Strategy (JAES), linked to the acceleration of progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In 2010, the EU formulated a Food Security Policy Framework (FSPF) to guide the strengthening and streamlining of EU and member state instruments to enhance food security. Internally, the EU is currently deliberating on reforms of its much-contested Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a process that should be completed in 2014.

As the FSPF suggests, there are numerous policy fields influencing food security¹⁴, which present challenges for coherence at various levels. At the national level, improved governance, increased participation of farmers and of the poor in political processes as well as the commitment of governments to a human rights-based approach to food can support greater food security. The multi-faceted character of the problem however challenges national policy makers to develop internal policy coherence, which should in turn produce consistent food security strategies to which donors such as the EU and its member states can align their contributions. At the regional level, challenges for coherence relate to linking national policies to regional integration agenda, particularly in areas such as trade, infrastructure, research, standards and regulation, water and investment policies. African regional communities are involved in harmonising these regional approaches to varying degrees, and most (including the regional CAADP initiatives) have so far not lived up to expectations. At the continental level, CAADP and the African Guidelines on Land Policy deserve special mention as initiatives to be supported.

At the EU level, policies areas such as agriculture, fisheries, trade, energy and climate change (biofuels and bioenergy) have to be well coordinated and consistent to have a positive impact on African food security. In addition, (EU) donor harmonisation and division of labour across the various fields has to be strengthened. At the global level, coherence between the major food-related UN organizations (FAO; IFAD; WFP) should be fostered, the Council on Food Security (CFS) strengthened and WTO rules (in the context of the struggling Doha Round) further developed.

In its FSPF, the EU has formulated four priorities to tackle this vast agenda: improving smallholder resilience and rural livelihoods, supporting effective governance, supporting regional agriculture and food security policies, and strengthening assistance mechanisms for vulnerable population groups. These priorities include activities across all mentioned levels, but some particularly contested ones are not included, for instance EU trade and investment policies and strategies, or so-called internal policies, notably agriculture and bioenergy.

¹⁴ National sectoral policies for agriculture, post harvest and agricultural value chains, land, water, biofuels, private sector development, income and jobs, growth, research and innovation, infrastructure, social security, finance, education, health, environmental protection, and disaster prevention and response are among the many issue areas relevant for food security.



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Given its weight in the EU budget and the role of producer subsidies and import restrictions in distorting agricultural markets, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been a key source of the incoherence of EU policy in addressing the problem of food insecurity in Africa. The CAP has experienced a long period of reform since 1992, widely decoupling support from production to make the CAP conform to WTO rules. In addition, the global situation has changed, high food prices and volatility being the main concerns. Some elements of this policy framework that negatively impact food security in Africa persist, notably export subsidies, which potentially disturb African food markets (though at present the volume of subsidised exports to Africa is very low). At the same time, trade policies have been profoundly reformed. Advancing trade liberalisation, African regional trade integration combining internal liberalisation with partially common external tariffs, the abolishment of quotas and tariffs by the EU for Least Developed Countries in the Everything-but-arms (EBA) initiative, and the contentious Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) have led to an erosion and dismantling of historical unilateral trade preferences that privileged African producers, and will possibly limit the ability of African governments to pursue protectionist trade policies that might assist in the development of the agricultural sector. Nevertheless, high world market prices for agricultural products make old trade policy concerns partially obsolete.

Beyond the areas of development cooperation, agricultural, and trade policy, the EU also has the potential to impact African efforts to address food insecurity through other dimensions of its external relations. While elements of its climate and energy policies designed to support mitigation and adaptation may reduce the devastation experienced by African farmers as a result of a changing climate in the long-term, measures promoted by the EU may in the shorter term illustrate the tradeoffs associated with different policy approaches. As an example, EU support for the development of clean energy via biofuels can contribute to land use changes that compete with cultivation directed toward the more immediate goal of increasing the availability of and access to food. Biofuel production can be promoted not only as an element of the EU's climate policy but also as a consequence of investment promotion policies where the potential tradeoffs between food security goals and other objectives may not be granted adequate consideration.

The session aims to engage participants on potential cooperation between European responses and African own processes to address the challenges of food security in Africa, with an emphasis on the prospects for promoting greater coherence between the different policies that have a bearing on food security. In this context, needs, priorities and actions undertaken in African countries need to be clear so that EU policy frameworks can be adapted accordingly in the years to come. It is also important to discuss how cooperation in agriculture can at best seize the comparative advantages of both Africa and Europe, and the Summit represents an invaluable opportunity to initiate dialogue on this matter.

Key questions:

1. What lessons can be drawn from previous EU efforts to address food security in Africa? What elements of EU action beyond the scope of the existing EU Food Security Policy Framework should be prioritized in the future?
2. What are the main sources of policy incoherence in the EU related to food security? What concrete steps can be taken to reduce incoherence?
3. What food security-related issues should be the focus of EU-AU level dialogue?



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d. Dialogue on Peace and Security challenges

With the advent of the African Union (AU) in 2001/2002, an institutional interlocutor to the EU was shaped that formulated the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in 2002. It was seen as an important response by African actors to systematically address peace and security on the continent.

Principal European funding for APSA was mobilised from the European Development Fund (EDF) following a request by the AU Heads of State Summit to the EU in 2003. Funding for APSA was mainly channelled through the African Peace Facility (APF) and has so far received over EUR 1 billion with funds from the 9th and 10th EDF. African support to APSA comes from the AU Peace Fund and some bilateral contributions from African states, but the African financial contribution to APSA is limited.

At the second EU-Africa Summit (Lisbon, 2007) the “EU-Africa Partnership on Peace and Security” was created as part of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) the ‘First Action Plan’ primarily structured around support to APSA was formulated. The Action Plan was updated in 2010 during the third EU-Africa Summit (Tripoli) and has maintained the strategic and tactical objectives of operationalising African crisis response capabilities in the framework of the APSA.

Implementation of the EU-Africa Partnership on Peace and Security

The EU-Africa Partnership on Peace and Security is one of the eight partnerships of the JAES. Due to its strong linkages with the APSA and the funding it was able to mobilise, it is seen as the most successful part of the JAES despite the challenges accompanying the implementation of the two Action Plans. The Peace and Security Partnership supports APSA’s three elements, i.e. the enhancement of dialogue on peace and security issues, the predictable funding for African-led peace support operations and the full operationalisation of APSA.

The first element could build on existing dialogue mechanisms but helped to further institutionalise the exchanges, notably through the creation of a regular joint meeting between the African Peace and Security Council (PSC) and its European counterpart, the Political and Security Committee (COPS). Another innovation was the creation of the Joint Expert Groups, the last two of which met in Addis Ababa (November 2012 and February 2013) to discuss the situations in Mali/Sahel, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Guinea Bissau as well as the support to the African Standby Force. Peace and security issues are also discussed during the dedicated Joint Ministerial Troika meetings that are supposed to take place every six months. The establishment of the EU’s first-ever delegation to the AU in Addis Ababa has clearly helped to strengthen dialogue and facilitate the alignment of the EU and the AU with regard to crisis situations in Mauritania, Madagascar, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Somalia, to name but a few. Still, a number of contentious issues have created a serious divide, for example the clash between Africa and the EU over President Robert Mugabe.

The second element is the predictable funding for African-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs), the most costly element of the APSA. This central issue to the Partnership has only temporarily been solved. The APF is the most predictable source of EU/AU funding to the PSOs as it operates on a multi-annual framework with funding from the EDF. But African ownership is difficult to guarantee when EU organs have to agree to finance AU missions before they can be launched. The other major aspect is sustainability. New ways to support African PSOs need to be found for which different options were explored. So far unsuccessful was the so-called Prodi Panel that explored a new UN mechanism within the framework of the UN Charter under chapter VIII in support of the AU Peace Fund (that was conceived as an entry point for channelling African member states funds as well as donor funding).



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Another option discussed was a remodelled AU/EU mechanism to support African PSOs but would require a reform that entails the creation of a more appropriate mechanism than the EDF when it comes to managing PSOs.

The third element is the full operationalisation of the APSA and is financed under the APF to enhance capacities for the AU and the regional mechanisms and to realise progress in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. After 10+ years of operation, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is widely seen as an overall positive experience in shaping the peace and security responses of the AU, despite many challenges. The APSA is anchored on the Peace and Security Council and comprises the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise (PoW), the African Standby Force (ASF), the African Peace Fund (APF) and the African Union Commission's department dealing with peace and security. Moreover the APSA comprises a Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy that seeks to achieve long-term sustainable development beyond stabilisation.

Overcoming conflict relapse

Appreciation from African actors and international partners for the APSA was witnessed during the AU conference that discussed 10 years of APSA – held in Cairo in November 2012. The stocktaking event reviewed how “African solutions are found to African problems” through AU mechanisms as well as through a collaboration of the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

The important contributions of the APSA to addressing acute security issues were recognized at this event. Conflict trends on the African continent over the last 20+ years show, similar to global trends, a substantial reduction of armed conflicts between states and a declining number of major civil wars. However, while the onset of new conflicts has significantly been reduced, conflict relapse has become characteristic of civil wars. According to the World Development Report (2011) every civil war that began since 2003 was a resumption of a previous civil war. Participants of the Cairo meeting expressed serious concerns about this conflict relapse and questions were raised about what could be done better to break out of often vicious circles of conflict to find paths leading towards reconstruction and sustainable development. The issue of repeated fragility in certain regions in Africa was also discussed during an AU meeting in September 2012 (Banjul, The Gambia). Participants questioned to what extent the APSA could be linked to the African Governance Architecture (AGA) thereby finding ways through which the more fundamental aspects of conflict could be addressed.

The issue is still on the table and raises questions whether more could be done in the area of PCRD, the obvious “connector” between security and development. PCRD is a very wide field comprising infrastructure reconstruction, questions about the provision of services but also institutional and governance related matters.

In this regard, a closer linking of the APSA and other processes aiming at post-conflict recovery, such as the New Deal, should also be considered. The New Deal was formulated by the g7+, a self-selected group of fragile states that first started to come together in 2010 in dialogue with international development actors and endorsed by a broad range of countries at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in 2011. It provides a basis for arriving at a more comprehensive and holistic approach to post-conflict reconstruction and peace consolidation. Its five peacebuilding and statebuilding goals are today an internationally recognised conceptual framework.



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The five goals are i) “legitimate politics” to foster inclusive political settlements and conflict resolution, ii) “security” to establish and strengthen people’s security, iii) “justice” to address injustices and increase in people’s access to justice, iv) “economic foundations” to generate employment and improve livelihoods, and v) “revenue and services” to manage revenue and build capacity for accountable and fair service delivery. So far, there have been few bold steps taken from the AU’s side to establish linkages between the processes that address post-conflict recovery and the New Deal that some African governments as well as international partners, including the EU and its member states, are strongly supporting.

In view of the conflict relapse but also in view of the recent developments in Northern Africa and the Sahel that threaten the more positive trends over the past years, questions should be raised what more can be done from the European as well as African side to address peace and especially peace consolidation in a more comprehensive way. An evolution of the EU support to the APSA took place from the 9th to the 10th EDF that put greater emphasis on PCRDR. This was in line with the original vision of the APSA.

To date, however, there has been limited progress on the implementation of this wider emphasis. The overwhelming focus of resources is still on the development of capacity to establish and operate targeted PSOs, an area where the absorption rate for external funding is high.

At the same time, significant delays are being encountered in bringing other planned activities under the APF, such as strengthening the civilian component in PSOs, establishing and empowering an EU-African civil society network capable of supporting peace and security initiatives, and bolstering effective post-conflict reconstruction, including reinforcing the role of women. Networking and collaboration between the AU and the EU with regard to the implementation of the AU Policy on PCRDR has also not progressed significantly, despite being an agreed priority area.

Questions on how to escape from conflict in Africa and how to establish peace consolidation will remain top of the international as well as the African agenda. They should be of concern to the political dialogue as well as policy dialogue in the context of the EU-Africa Partnership on Peace and Security.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can the Partnership efforts in the area of PCRDR become more effective, what can be done differently from before? 2. What steps can be taken from the African side to link the APSA more effectively to the AGA and can international partners play a role in this? 3. What role can international partners, including the EU, play to reinforce African efforts at continental, regional and national levels to address conflict relapse through better linkages between the APSA and specifically the AU policy framework for PCRDR, the African Solidarity Initiative, and the New Deal? |
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Methodology and participants

The Conference is attended by European and Africa mid-to-high level policy makers working on the partnership between the two continents. The conference will also include a selected group of civil society, Think Tank representatives and private sector representatives who have closely followed the partnership as well as representatives from other international partners.

Kindly refer to the methodology pamphlet for more information.

About the European Think Tank Group (ETTg)

The ETTg was established in 2010, and comprises four major EU development and foreign policy think tanks (DIE, ECDPM, FRIDE, ODI). The ETTg capitalises on their respective knowledge and expertise through relevant joint studies (e.g. European Development Report) and joint participation in multi-stakeholder events such as the European Development Days.