

**March 2023**

In February 2022, African Union (AU) and European Union (EU) leaders agreed to deepen their relationship and strengthen their partnership in multilateral forums. The EU and the AU have converging interests in a number of areas, such as the fight against climate change and the promotion of a sustainable, job-creating African economy. Measures to fight COVID-19 and to prevent future pandemics have lent new impetus to partnerships in areas such as health, the fight against climate change and the promotion of digital transformation. However, the EU and AU have still to find common ground on migration, security management, and fundamental values. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has triggered diverging reactions from African and European countries. At the same time the war has aggravated the most urgent global issues, such as food and energy insecurity. This clearly highlights the need to strengthen the links between the two continents in order to tackle those issues.

Current challenges**Ethiopia: War in Tigray – Background and state of play**

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, December 2022

The Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) agreed on 2 November 2022 to cease hostilities and return to constitutional order. The 2-year civil war has killed thousands of people and seriously aggravated the country's already disastrous humanitarian situation. Fighters on all sides deliberately hindered humanitarian access and committed atrocities against civilians, including children. The EU has suspended most of its budget support to Ethiopia, a country long considered a cornerstone for EU relations with the Horn of Africa. During the conflict, several European Parliament resolutions condemned the human rights abuses and non-respect of international humanitarian law by all parties.

The African Union's first climate strategy – And EU-Africa climate cooperation

Briefing by Eric Pichon, graphics and maps by Lucille Killmayer and Gyorgyi Macsai, EPRS, November 2022

The African Union has made public a comprehensive strategy to address climate change. It aims to develop resource-efficient industry and make key sectors such as agriculture and food systems, water resources, energy, infrastructure and transport, more climate-resilient. With this blueprint, the AU proposes a vision it hopes will rally both its Member States and other parties to the UN convention on climate change. The AU is calling on the EU and international donors to scale up climate finance to help Africa achieve the ambitions laid down in its climate strategy. The European Parliament wants the EU and its Member States to align their policies with the EU's international commitments on climate action, and to improve cooperation with Africa in this matter.

Russia's war on Ukraine: Impact on global food security and EU response

Briefing by Anna Caprile and Eric Pichon, graphics by Lynne Stuart, EPRS, September 2022

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine – the 'breadbasket of Europe' – has triggered energy and food supply challenges, exacerbating the existing vulnerabilities of food systems already weakened under the effect of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. The response of the international community, including a United Nations–Türkiye-brokered agreement to unblock grain exports from Black Sea ports, has calmed fears of an imminent global food crisis. A number of food import and food aid-dependent countries, however, remain highly vulnerable to food price and foreign exchange volatility.

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[Russia's war on Ukraine: International reactions](#)

'At a glance' note, by Matthew Parry and Ionel Zamfir, map by Lucille Killmayer, EPRS, March 2022

On 2 March 2022, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) convened in a special session and adopted, with a broad majority (141 votes in favour, to 5 against, with 35 abstentions and 12 absentees), resolution ES-11/1 reaffirming Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and calling for the unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine. In Africa, 17 countries abstained, including those importing Russian arms, those where the Russian Wagner Group is active, and two of the continent's most stable democracies, Senegal and South Africa.

[Jihadist networks in sub-Saharan Africa: Origins, patterns and responses](#)

Briefing by Branislav Stanicek, with Mathilde Betant-Rasmussen, map by Samy Chahri, EPRS, September 2021

The rise of jihadist activity in the regions of the Sahel, Lake Chad, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa, and more recently in northern Mozambique, cannot be attributed solely to the influence of jihadist ideology from the Middle East. A number of factors have contributed to the deterioration of security, among them poverty, corruption, various local grievances, separatist movements, pre-existing intercommunal violence between herders and farmers over land rights (exacerbated by the consequences of climate change), weak state presence, and a lack of prospects for young people. The spike in violence attributed to jihadist groups and their ties to foreign movements has prompted international stakeholders, including the EU, to launch counterterrorism operations, also involving local actors. Nevertheless, the military approach that the international community has preferred up to now has not succeeded in addressing deeper community grievances or in strengthening the state presence.

[Colonial-era cultural heritage in European museums](#)

'At a glance' note by Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, EPRS, September 2021

While Europeans access and enjoy their rich cultural heritage, making the most of the European Heritage Days every September, it is worth reflecting on what access people living in territories once dominated by Europe's colonial powers have to their cultural heritage. Colonial times saw the destruction of cultural property and removal of precious and symbolic items. Countries now going through the long decolonisation process have reached a point where they are exploring ways to recover their cultural property and heritage.

Cooperation frameworks

[Understanding the EU's approach to a new partnership with Africa](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, February 2022

Africa has been put at the core of the Commission's geopolitical work programme. The comprehensive partnership discussed during the February 2022 summit between EU and African Heads of State and Government is based on five pillars put forward by the EU: green transition and energy access, digital transformation, sustainable growth and jobs, peace and governance, and migration and mobility.

[After Cotonou: Towards a new agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific states](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, September 2021

After 2 years of negotiations, the text of a renewed partnership agreement between the EU and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states was initialled in April 2021 after a set of multi-level negotiations. The new agreement still needs to be signed by the parties, and further legal procedures will be required before it can be provisionally applied or enter fully into force.

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[New EU strategic priorities for the Sahel: Addressing regional challenges through better governance](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon with Mathilde Betant-Rasmussen, map by Samy Chahri, EPRS, July 2021

Political instability and a lack of government legitimacy have made responding to the Sahel's security and humanitarian issues all the more challenging. The new EU integrated strategy in the Sahel aims to strengthen action at political level, focusing on governance mechanisms, human rights and collaboration with civil society and local authorities, while maintaining security cooperation with states in the region.

[Mission de partenariat militaire de l'UE au Niger](#)

'At a glance' note by Bruno Bilquin and Eric Pichon, EPRS, February 2023

Suite au retrait des forces française Barkhane et euro-canadienne Takuba du Mali – où elles aidaient l'armée à combattre les groupes terroristes – en février 2022, le Niger est devenu l'un des nouveaux pôles sécuritaires européens au Sahel. En décembre 2022, l'Union européenne y a établi une nouvelle mission de partenariat militaire dont les coûts communs seront financés par la Facilité européenne pour la paix. Le Conseil a officiellement lancé cette mission le 20 février 2023.

[The Horn of Africa](#)

'At a glance' note by Eric Pichon, EPRS, September 2022

Food insecurity and violent conflict plague the eight Horn of Africa countries (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda). A hub on Red Sea trade and migration routes, bordering the unstable areas of the Sahel and central Africa, the region is of strategic interest for the EU. The EU's policy for the Horn of Africa initially focused on development, but is now set to tackle security issues too in the wake of piracy attacks and the rise in instability.

Funding

[European Peace Facility: Ukraine and beyond](#)

'At a glance' note by Bruno Bilquin, EPRS, November 2022

Reacting to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, for the first time in its history the EU has mobilised funds for the delivery by Member States of military equipment, including lethal weaponry, to assist a partner country. The European Peace Facility (EPF) was not however primarily designed to respond to a war on the European continent. Its original purpose was to allow the financing of common foreign and security policy (CFSP) activities with military or defence implications, and to express the EU's ambition as a global security provider, notably in sub-Saharan Africa.

[Implementation of the Global Europe Instrument: First steps – The European Parliament's scrutiny role](#)

In-depth analysis by Bruno Bilquin, graphics by Samy Chahri, EPRS, November 2022

With a budget of almost €79.5 billion in 2021 prices, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, is the EU's main financing instrument for external action for the 2021-2027 period. Exploring the steps that led to the preparation of the final 'programming documents', or implementing acts, this paper attempts to render the comitology procedure a little less cryptic. It describes the new features of the 'high-level geopolitical dialogue' and the delegated acts. The paper also outlines how the European Parliament will contribute – through its scrutiny of Global Europe instrument implementation – to strengthening partnerships and promoting development, democracy and sustainability.

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[Financing for Africa – The EU budget and beyond](#)

Briefing by Velina Lilyanova, graphics by Samy Chahri, EPRS, June 2021

This briefing aims to map the main EU financing instruments of relevance to Africa, including the funds that are outside the EU budget. It also points out the main novelties in the new long-term budget that have an impact on financing for Africa, such as the inclusion of the European Development Fund in the EU budget and the merging of most previous instruments into a single one, the Global Europe instrument.

Democracy, human rights and human security

[African Union instruments to protect human rights and democracy](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, November 2022

The creation of the African Union (AU) in 2002 sparked hopes of a new era in African integration that would put an end to the most egregious violations of human rights and democratic norms that have plagued the region since it acceded to independence. To fulfil this mission, the AU was endowed with broader competences and new institutional mechanisms. More and more countries have ratified new and existing regional human rights and governance treaties, but lack of commitment by Member States to the more constraining mechanisms included in these risks undermining the efficacy of this normative system. Two major instruments stand out among these new developments: AU competence to intervene militarily in major crises to stop severe human rights violations, and a proclaimed zero tolerance policy towards unconstitutional changes of government. The intergovernmental nature of the organisation and the reluctance of member states to grant too much power to it have made it difficult for the AU to achieve its objectives.

[State of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa: Democratic progress at risk](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, June 2021

In Africa, some unexpected democratic transitions have taken place while overall democratic decline has set in. Two sets of reasons account for the fragility of democracies in sub-Saharan Africa. The first include low socio-economic development, conflict and insecurity; the second include weak institutions, lack of judicial independence, manipulation of electoral laws and constitutional norms, and the severe limitation of civil and political rights. For the EU, issues of concern include the shrinking space for civil society, the need to broaden political participation for various groups, such as women and youth, and the impact of digital development on democracy and human rights in societies that still suffer limited internet access and insufficient digital literacy.

Trade

[EU economic partnership agreements with ACP countries: Which way forward?](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, November 2022

For two decades, the EU has sought to modernise its preferential trading relationship with the sub-Saharan ACP countries and establish free trade areas with regional groupings under economic partnership agreements (EPAs). So far, the results have been mixed, with nine agreements negotiated – covering more than half the ACP countries – but not yet all implemented. While they have given rise to both fears and expectations, assessments of the EPAs that have already been implemented show very limited effects, possibly owing to their long drawn-out and gradual implementation. In a resolution of June 2022 on the future of EU trade with Africa, Parliament insisted on the need for a careful assessment of their impact, action to strengthen their – currently limited – sustainable development provisions, the introduction of a sanctions mechanism for non-compliance, and efforts to ensure that they do not disrupt regional integration.

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[New EU scheme of generalised preferences](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, July 2022

On 21 September 2021, the Commission published its proposal for a new EU generalised scheme of preferences (GSP). The Commission considers that the scheme has delivered on its objectives, and proposes some 'fine-tuning'. To ensure that its benefits remain broadly shared, it proposes changes to the economic vulnerability criteria for GSP+ and to the product graduation threshold for standard GSP. Taking on board proposals from civil society, but also from the Parliament, the Commission is proposing to extend negative conditionality to environmental and good governance conventions, and to improve monitoring and stakeholder involvement overall. Civil society organisations and other stakeholders have put forward some more ambitious proposals, such as making the monitoring fully transparent and rewarding countries that fulfil jointly agreed benchmarks relating to the conventions under the GSP with additional preferences.

Other European Parliament publications on the topic: [Think Tank on the European Parliament website](#)

External publications on Africa: [Selected Online Reading guides of the European Parliament Library](#)

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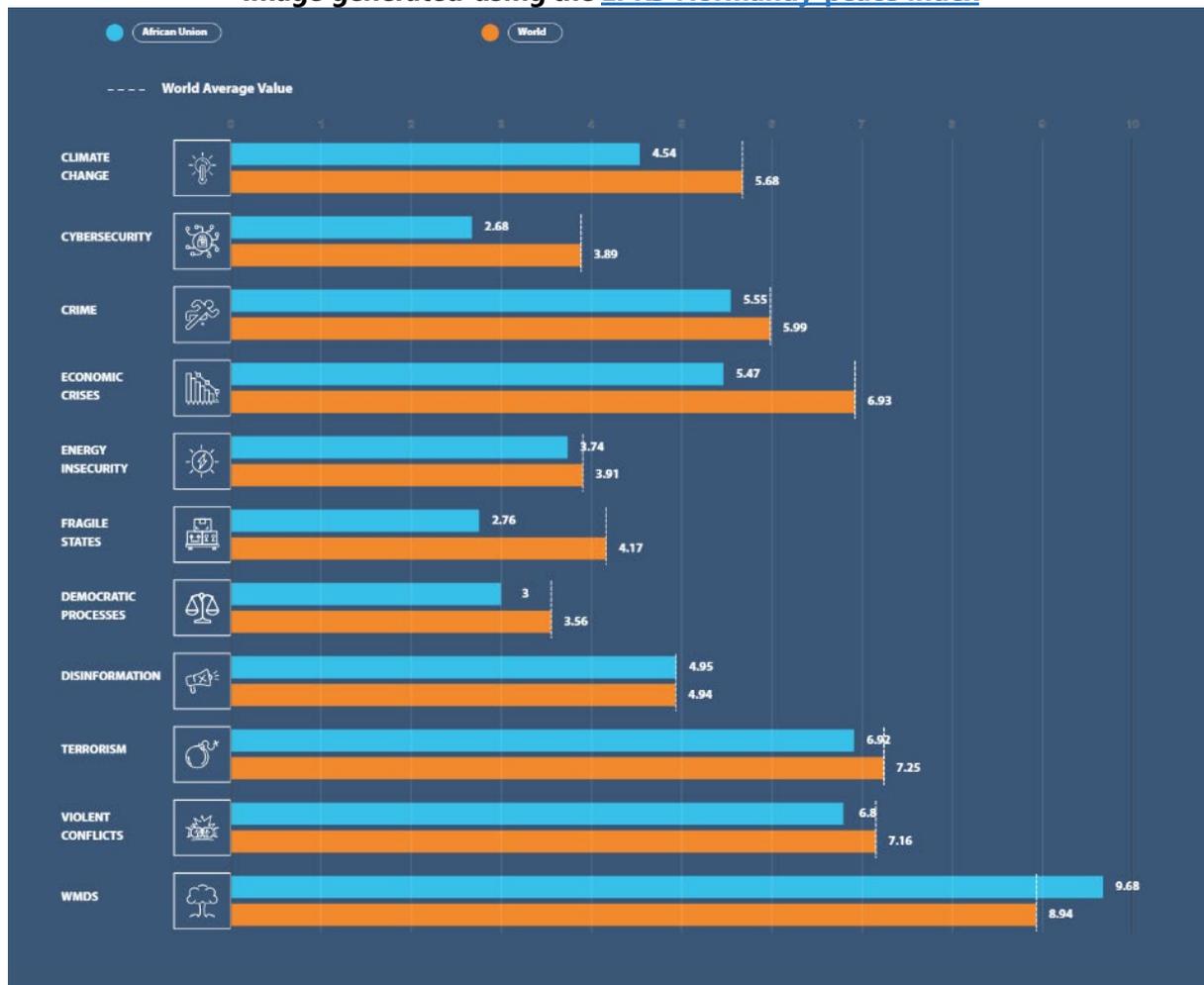


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African Union countries compared to world average in terms of risks

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