

EU strategy in the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa countries are plagued by violence and insecurity. A hub on the Red Sea trade and migration route, bordering the unstable areas of the Sahel and central Africa, the region is of strategic interest for the European Union. The EU has adopted an integrated framework to align various external policy programmes and instruments aimed at securing the region. However, strong antagonisms between the states concerned add to the difficulty of achieving a coordinated approach.

A region hit by natural and man-made crises

In its broadest sense, the 'Horn of Africa', the easternmost part of Africa, refers to the eight member states of [IGAD](#), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development; [Somaliland](#), a self-governing region of Somalia, is not recognised as an independent state by IGAD, nor by the EU.

Seventy per cent of the Horn of Africa's land is arid or semi-arid, making it **vulnerable to extreme rainfall variability**. In 2016, [droughts](#) have been intensified by the [El-Niño](#) weather phenomenon; they can be followed by flooding caused by the opposite phase of the phenomenon, La Niña. The number of people suffering from [food insecurity](#) doubled in the region between August 2015 and August 2016. Land and water scarcity is one of the main [conflict factors](#) in the region. The region could benefit from **underused assets**: farmlands, or oil and gas reserves in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Somalia; and the [Nile river basin](#) could be better exploited to develop access to water or river trade routes. Human resources are available, but developing infrastructure to tap into this potential more effectively would require [trans-border cooperation](#), currently [hindered](#) by conflict and distrust.

Conflicts are exacerbated by ethnic and religious rivalries, often fuelled by neighbouring countries, or extremist groups taking advantage of the low level of governance. As a result, the [Horn of Africa](#) is one of the [most insecure](#) regions in the world. In 2016 alone, all the Horn's countries have been affected by [inter- or intra-state violence](#): border disputes – including skirmishes of varying intensity – between Eritrea and Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea, Kenya and Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda; crackdowns on anti-government demonstrations in Djibouti and Ethiopia; and ethnic-related conflicts in all of them. Protracted civil wars, pitting rebels against government forces, are still causing great bloodshed in [South Sudan](#), [Darfur](#) in Sudan and [Somalia](#). [Religious extremist groups](#), such as [Al-Shabaab](#) from Somalia and [the LRA](#) from Uganda, are expanding across borders; [ISIL/Da'esh](#) is also present in the region, notably in Somalia. [Climate change](#), [conflict](#), and [human rights abuses](#) are causing **people to flee** in permanent flows, within their own countries or towards [neighbouring countries](#) or [more distant destinations](#).

EU strategy: a comprehensive framework

The EU's policy for the Horn of Africa initially focused on development, before tackling more political problems in the wake of [piracy](#) attacks off the Coast of Somalia. In November 2011, the EU Council adopted the [EU strategic framework for the Horn of Africa](#), aimed at aligning various external policy programmes and instruments towards **five objectives**: good governance and human rights; peace-building; preventing the insecurity spilling over from the Horn onto other regions and – added to the strategy in 2015 – from neighbouring countries onto the Horn; economic growth and poverty reduction; and cross-border political and economic cooperation, in particular through the role of the African Regional Economic Communities. The [Regional Action Plan for the Horn of Africa 2015-2020](#) upholds the framework's objectives while focusing on

Map: The Horn of Africa



enhancing regional cooperation on security, migration and displacement. In the fight against violent extremism, youth is a priority focus: prevention is encouraged through specific measures to promote religious and social tolerance, and other relevant action such as job creation and the fight against gender discrimination.

Financing. The strategic framework for the Horn of Africa has more than one [source of funding](#). It is financed by the EU budget (under several lines: common foreign and security policy, the Development Cooperation Instrument and humanitarian aid), by the Member States through the [European Development Fund](#) (EDF) and their own bilateral programmes, and by the new [Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#), which is itself a pool of resources from the EDF, the EU budget, and some EU Member States. It is therefore difficult to get a precise overview; furthermore, financial documents do not always mention the geographical destinations of payments. According to the latest EU aid and development [annual report](#), the EU disbursed €861.97 million for the Horn of Africa countries in 2014. Development aid was financed mainly by the EDF (€462.46 million, also including funding for the African Peace Facility). The EU budget financed humanitarian aid predominantly (€307 million) – the remaining sums from the EU budget being dedicated to development aid (€56.51 million), peace and security (€30.12 million) and promotion of democracy and human rights (€5.64 million).

The strategic framework requires the **coordination of several actors and instruments**. It recommends that EU Member States' initiatives in the region be coherent with its objectives. As regards EU bodies, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU delegations, and the Commission's Directorates-General for Development ([DEVCO](#)), Humanitarian Aid ([ECHO](#)) and Migration and Home Affairs (HOME) are involved. Three common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions are operating in the region with EU Member State participation: EUNAVFOR Atalanta, EUTM Somalia and EUCAP Nestor. [EUNAVFOR](#), the first EU naval force, fights piracy off the coast of Somalia – in particular to protect UN [World Food Programme](#) vessels. It is also aimed at strengthening maritime security in the region, in cooperation with [EUCAP Nestor](#), a civilian capacity-building mission focused on Somalia's maritime security. [EUTM Somalia](#) is the EU training mission for the Somali military. These three CSDP missions are coordinated by means of a [common operational centre](#) (OPCEN). In line with the strategic framework, DG DEVCO and ECHO have launched a common programme: 'Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience' ([SHARE](#)). SHARE targets climate-based food crises by linking short-term humanitarian aid and longer term development policy. Thematic working groups on migration or [countering violent extremism](#) in the Horn of Africa bring together the EU departments concerned. The [Special Representative, Alexander Rondos](#), is the main EU interlocutor with the African Union (AU) and IGAD but he does not have a hierarchical position vis-à-vis the various EU institutions.

After its Committee on Foreign Affairs commissioned an [assessment of the strategy](#), the European Parliament [welcomed](#) the Horn of Africa strategy in January 2013. In a [number of resolutions](#), Parliament has stressed that the eradication of poverty and respect for [human rights](#) should not be hindered by security considerations. Parliament has hailed the AU and IGAD as valuable partners for the EU. It has also called for a [regular review](#) of the strategy.

Fostering regional cooperation: a difficult challenge

In addition to improving the coordination of EU staffs and Member States, the EU is endeavouring to foster regional cooperation on security and development issues. Its main partners in the region are the AU and IGAD. AU missions in [Somalia](#) and [Darfur](#) (Sudan) are supported through the EDF-funded [African Peace Facility](#). The [EU-Horn Africa Migration route initiative](#) is a policy dialogue on the smuggling of migrants, run jointly by the EU and the AU. The EU is [supporting](#) IGAD's [organisational reforms](#) in an effort to promote decisions that are better informed and better implemented. Regional coordination is a difficult challenge: several analyses point out that the region's states tend to react primarily according to their perceived national interests, thus exacerbating rather than easing tensions. IGAD was a [successful mediator](#) in the 2005 Sudan [peace agreement](#), in the setting-up of a transitional government in Somalia, and in the drafting of the [South Sudan peace agreement](#); but when it comes to implementation, IGAD member states often fail to maintain a consistent approach. For example, in [South Sudan](#), Uganda and Sudan are competing for political, military and economic influence; in [Somalia](#), despite the perception of Al-Shabaab as a common threat, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda are reportedly not coordinating their military presence well. Despite the EU's intention to privilege the regional approach, [Ethiopia](#) and [Kenya](#), the regional '[hegemony](#)', are more influential on account of their economic potential, their military capacity and their ability to retain refugees. In accordance with its new [global strategy](#) the EU also acknowledges the importance of addressing Horn of Africa issues with interlocutors such as the [Gulf States](#), the [Sahel countries](#) and the [EU's southern neighbours](#).