

Commitments made at the hearing of

JUTTA URPIILAINEN

Commissioner-designate

International Partnerships



The Commissioner-designate, Jutta Urpilainen, appeared before the European Parliament on 01 October 2019 to answer questions put by MEPs from the Committee on Development. During the hearing, she made a number of commitments which are highlighted in this document. These commitments refer to her portfolio, as described in the [mission letter](#) sent to her by Ursula von der Leyen, President-elect of the European Commission, including:

- Building sustainable partnerships.

Please note that the quotes included in this document only make reference to oral commitments made during the [hearing](#). The [verbatim report](#) of the public hearing is available on the [Commissioners-designate hearings website](#). The Commissioner-designate was also sent some written questions in advance of the hearing to which she provided [written answers](#).



Building sustainable partnerships

Comprehensive strategy for Africa

"If confirmed as Commissioner, it is my intention to build on the EU-Africa Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, towards a comprehensive European strategy for Africa. In this effort, I will work alongside the High-Representative and Vice-President and other fellow Commissioners. The partnership with our neighbouring continent has deepened economically to the benefit of both African and European citizens, with the private sector involved in creating jobs and providing new skills. I want to continue on this path, deepening our mutual interests and our capacity to reap opportunities jointly. We must turn our backs on the old narrative of Africa as a continent of instability and poverty. Instead we have to welcome, with open arms, Africa as a young continent of hope and prosperity."

"I think that in that comprehensive strategy for Africa we need to have agriculture involved, we need to have trade involved, we need to have environmental aspects involved. I think that that strategy gives us a new opportunity also to support agriculture in Africa. So I think that's the one new tool we are able to use."

"When it comes to the role of Africa, I see that the future of Africa is the future of Europe. These two continents are connected to each other. So, of course, I would like to change the narrative, [...]. There are 1.2 billion people living in Africa and over half of them are under 25 years old. So it's a continent of opportunities and, of course, we need to support that positive narrative."

"[...]my personal view is that an Africa strategy – a comprehensive strategy for Africa – is one tool for that. It's one tool to have a partnership with Africa but also to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It should be a comprehensive strategy so that different political policy sectors are part of that approach. Trade needs to be present, agriculture, the environment and so on. This is something I'm starting to prepare, together with High-Representative/Vice-President Borrell, but I want to stress the importance of the commitment of the whole College. It can't be my process; it can't be our process. It needs to be the process of the whole College."

"I personally see [...] that transparency is a very important value for me, and I also understand that in the future, of course, if we are thinking about what will be the future of the Africa Trust Fund or generally different kinds of trust funds, I think that Parliament should have an important role."

Post-Cotonou Agreement

I will also make it my priority to conclude negotiations on the post-Cotonou Agreement. We need to complete a modern, strategic and influential alliance between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific States on the international stage – one that serves our common interests and all our people. And let me assure you today that I will not waiver in my commitment to the appropriate parliamentary dimension of this future partnership. The European Union draws its strength from all its institutions. So I want to emphasise my commitment to working with the other institutions towards the same objective. We will cement the EU as a world leader in international cooperation and development support. As a parliamentarian, I truly believe in representative democracy, and I will do my utmost to make the special relationship between the Commission and the European Parliament ever stronger and deeper."

"I also see that the parliamentary dimension has to be present in future ACP cooperation. It has to be part of that cooperation. [...]. I think that the most important thing for me is to take care that somehow, in one way or another, the parliamentary dimension will be present. This is something we will definitely discuss if I start my work as a Commissioner at the beginning of November. It will be one of my priorities. I intend to participate in the Parliamentary Assembly in November in Rwanda"

Comprehensive partnership with countries of migration origin and transit

"[...] around 85% of migrants are living in the developing countries. So I think through development cooperation we can also support those countries – so countries of origin, but also countries of transit."

"We need to respect the rule of law and human rights. That's very, very clear to me, and of course, I'm very committed to that approach as a Commissioner-designate"

"I don't really believe that only conditionality could solve the migration crisis or migration generally [...]. So from that perspective, as I said earlier, I think the Commission should have one migration policy, and of course the whole college is representing that policy and development cooperation and development aid is one part of that package, but it can't be the only tool. So for me that is very clear."

Sustainable Development Goals

“The European Commissioner for International Partnerships delivers on the implementation of SDGs in the world. My ambition is to eradicate poverty through international cooperation and development support. Our global responsibility is set out in the Treaties and in our alliance of values of human rights and human dignity. My ambition is to do it in a strategic and effective manner, ensuring it evolves with new global realities”.

“Back in 2015, when the global community moved from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals, it abandoned the formula of ‘north-south’, ‘donor-recipient’, ‘developed-developing’. Instead, the global community set out a universal, ambitious and far reaching blueprint agreed by all and for all. As a European Commissioner, I would make sure that the EU is a reliable and solid ally for partner countries in their SDG journeys.”

“Policy coherence is important, and [...] we need to improve policy coherence in everything we do.”
 “[...]without policy coherence we are not able to achieve the sustainable development goals. So, [...] I see Agenda 2030 as a kind of compass. It’s a framework through which we should see and analyse all the policy work we are doing in different spectrums. Of course, we cannot do this just via the European institutions: the Member States need to be part of that process. And, [...] joint planning, joint programming, and then also joint follow-up so that we are able to see the results and achievements, is an important tool to be used. [...] Without policy coherence, including agriculture, trade, external relations, we are not able to achieve sustainable development goals. It’s the key.”
 “[...]”

“I will focus on SDGs, fighting inequality and poverty eradication”. “[...]my personal commitment will be to fight against inequalities, because I think this is a huge challenge, not only for the middle-income countries but also almost in every European Union Member State. So these will be the guiding principles for me, that we are able to fight against inequality with different kinds of tools.”

“[...] if we want to achieve the sustainable development goals by the year 2030 we need to get the private sector involved, that is necessary. Otherwise, we won’t achieve the sustainable development goals. Action has already been taken through the alliance initiative made by President Juncker. I think the results have been quite good. But in the coming years we need to get more investments to Africa and, of course, a private sector has to be part of that approach. [...] So we all understand that, even if we are able to increase the public finances to development cooperation, we are not surviving. So we

need to have the private sector involved, but of course we also need to have regulations and rules”

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

“[...] let me assure you today of my deep commitment to prioritising gender equality and mainstreaming it in all our policies and programmes”.

“Sexual and reproductive health will be a central focus of our work for gender equality, that’s very clear for me. [...]I think the Spotlight initiative is an important initiative, and I’m very committed to continuing that work in the future. I also see that in the field of gender equality and gender parity we need strong partnerships around the world. Access to health services is [...] of course something I would like to improve and strengthen [...], because I think that to be able to access health services is a basic right for all of us, and it should also be a basic right in our partner countries.”

“I can promise you, here in front of the Parliament, that we are going to make a Gender Action Plan III. This is something I will propose and I’m very committed to preparing, so I think that is one tool for us to provide and promote gender equality.”

“Gender equality is a key priority for me, so of course I will try to look for more resources for that as well. I fully agree with you that we need to mainstream gender equality. We have to remember that gender equality is part of the Sustainable Development Goals. We have all committed ourselves to those goals, so also from that perspective, I believe that if we want to improve the living conditions and political or any kind of participation of women, we need to have this kind of holistic approach and I’m ready to work on that.”

Supporting civil society around the world

“Civil society organisations are perhaps our greatest allies and must be at the heart of the European Union’s work on international cooperation and development. It is in everyone’s interest to involve them as much as possible in policy-making and the design and implementation of our programme. We need politics for our planet, for humankind. European citizens are expecting us to act. The youth – they want more. Our children deserve that we do our best. I want to build trust together with you – trust, that our partners see a strong EU delivering SDGs and fighting poverty. Trust, that our citizens understand the reasoning and results of our development and cooperation work. Trust between people and institutions, because a more equal world is achieved only together.”

"[...]we need to cooperate with international organisations, civil society, national governments and so on. Because only through cooperation are we able to achieve results."

"[...] civil society and NGOs are doing excellent work in many very difficult and fragile countries and areas. So, of course, I'm willing to cooperate with them and other stakeholders as well and also learn more from the experience of our small and big Member States."

Facilitate a swift agreement on the post-2020 Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument

"I intend to work with you and others to facilitate an agreement on the neighbourhood development and international cooperation instrument."

"I am very committed to improving our transparency"

"[...] I'd do my best to reach a common understanding with all the institutions, but we need first to get the MFF ready and negotiated because, of course, NDICI will be part of the MFF."

"I definitely want to do everything I can to increase financial resources for the least developed countries in the world. We have committed ourselves to a target of 0.15 or 0.2%, but unfortunately we haven't achieved that, and that's something we need to work together on in the future."

"I will commit to using our assistance also for leveraging more domestic revenue and more private-sector capital"

"I will continue driving work with Member States on joint analyses, joint programming and joint implementation, as well as on achieving the Official Development Assistance target of 0.7% of Gross National Income."

"I personally believe that we should integrate finance ministers and heads of States into this 0.7 target discussion and I'm ready to try to do that."

"I'm ready to commit myself – to use, through NDICI, this 20% of our financing for human development. This is important for me. What concerns me is the quality of education, because it's not only a question of access to education, but also of the quality of education[...]. For me it's very clear that education is key for poverty reduction and will therefore be my priority."

"I know that the European Union is using over 20% of its development funding for climate environment already, but I fully agree with you that we need to do more." "I know that the European Union is supporting oceans, and the development amount is something like EUR 720 million – so quite a lot, but definitely this will be very close to my heart in the future."

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