

A new EU-Africa Strategy – A partnership for sustainable and inclusive development

The European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) have converging interests in a number of areas, such as the fight against climate change and the promotion of sustainable, job-creating economic growth in Africa. However, they still have to find common ground on migration, security management, and fundamental values. In March 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) proposed to build a new and comprehensive partnership with Africa, emphasising the EU's will to strengthen the links between the two continents. In line with this proposed partnership, the European Parliament is expected to discuss on an own-initiative report during its March II plenary session.

European Commission proposal

In presenting the [Commission's 2020 work programme](#), the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that 'the Commission and the High Representative will develop a new comprehensive strategy with Africa to boost economic relations, create jobs in both continents and deepen our partnership across the board'. On 9 March 2020, the Commission and the High Representative presented a joint communication, '[Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa](#)'. This [communication](#) builds on the 2018 '[New Alliance for sustainable development and jobs](#)' and on existing international, African and EU frameworks and policies, such as the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), the [AU Agenda 2063](#), the [EU Global Strategy](#), the [European Consensus on Development](#), and the 2007 [Joint Africa-EU Strategy](#). It proposes **five thematic partnerships**: (1) a partnership for green transition and energy access in compliance with the Paris Agreement on climate change; (2) a partnership for digital transformation; (3) a partnership for sustainable growth and jobs, promoting investment through innovative financing and enhancing 'learning, knowledge and skills, research and innovation capacities, particularly for women and youth, protecting and improving social rights, and eradicating child labour'; (4) a partnership for peace and governance; and (5) a partnership 'to ensure a balanced, coherent, and comprehensive approach to migration and mobility'. The proposed strategy also features a **transversal action** to strengthen multilateralism in deepening the EU-Africa alliance in international fora.

EU-African Union meetings about the strategy

The European Commission presented its proposals during the [10th AU-EU Commission-to-Commission meeting](#) held on 27 February 2020 in Ethiopia. In its 30 June 2020 [conclusions](#), the Council approved the joint communication as 'an excellent basis on which to initiate a new ambitious partnership with Africa'. The strategy is to be discussed at the next [AU-EU Summit](#) with a view to adopting common guidelines. Usually triennial, this summit was initially scheduled for autumn 2020 in Brussels, but was later [postponed to 2021](#), due to the coronavirus context. A videoconference between EU and African leaders ('mini-summit'), planned for 9 December 2020, was also [postponed sine die](#) at the request of the African Union. Portugal's Presidency of the Council of the EU (January-June 2021) is [committed](#) to intensifying EU cooperation with Africa and the AU, and has indicated its will to 'take an active part in [preparing the sixth EU-African Union Summit](#)'. European Parliament committees [support](#) this endeavor. The summit, however, has not yet been [rescheduled](#). The [future EU-ACP agreement](#), with its three regional pillars (sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific), should also be endorsed by the Council of the EU during the Portuguese Presidency.

European Parliament position

On 11 February 2020, the European Parliament [debated](#) with Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships in plenary. On behalf of the Committee on Development (DEVE), its chair, Tomas Tobé (EPP, Sweden), supported the concept of a comprehensive strategy with Africa, provided this strategy includes a concrete plan, an analysis of possible negative and positive outcomes, and effective tools for monitoring and coordinating aid. DEVE exchanged on 15 July 2020 with Commissioner Urpilainen and senior representatives of the EEAS on the topic.

DEVE adopted in February 2021 an [own-initiative report](#) on the **sustainable and inclusive development aspects** of the proposed strategy. The report highlights the need to adapt the partnership in the light of coronavirus impacts, which risk widening inequalities, increasing food insecurity and poverty, and aggravating insecurity in Africa. It calls for closer cooperation on key areas such as **security, agriculture, and health**, to better anticipate future health crises. It insists that the future relationship must move away from a donor-recipient dynamic, and give African countries the means to achieve sustainable development, including through **fair and ethical trade**. According to the report, the partnership should give priority to **human development and human rights**, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Taking into account the rapid population growth in Africa, the report calls for making **youth** a priority for development aid and giving urgent attention to children in conflict areas. It regrets that EU-Africa relations have been dominated by the migration issue – and notes in particular the discrepancies in this area between the EU and ACP negotiating mandates for the future EU-ACP agreement. It suggests that a renewed partnership help devise a **fair migration policy**, really tackling the root causes of migration and better delivering on an effective visa and legal migration policy. The partnership should support increased **mobilisation of domestic resources in Africa**, notably through the fight against corruption and against tax evasion. The report highlights the need for the new budgetary instrument for external action (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, [NDICI](#)) to dedicate adequate resources, notably to **climate objectives**. It points out that many Member States have not reached the 0.7 % gross national income (GNI) target for official development assistance (ODA) and that some have even decreased their ODA.

Own-initiative report: [2020/2041\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: DEVE; Rapporteur: Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, (Renew, France). For further information see our briefing '[Towards a new EU strategy with Africa: A renewed focus on outreach](#)'.

