European Parliament

A Comprehensive EU Strategy for Africa

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BRIEFINGS

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ABSTRACT

The new EU-Africa Strategy presented by the Commission on 9 March puts a reinforced emphasis on the creation of a real partnership with a continent whose relevance for Europe is growing by the day. The three briefings focus on different aspects of this new partnership, the first one dealing with the implications for the political dialogue with a focus on (good) governance and the even bigger challenge of security and migration. The second briefing has a look at more 'traditional' aspects of this relationship, development and humanitarian aid, complemented with the rising challenge of climate change. The new approach is also illustrated by the emphasis put on the promotion of bilateral trade and investment relations, the topic of the third briefing. All these briefings also try to incorporate first elements on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the bilateral relationship.

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European Parliament

BRIEFING Nº1

A Comprehensive EU Strategy for Africa Political Dialogue: Governance, Security and Migration

ABSTRACT

Much has changed since the creation of the Joint Africa-European Union (EU) Strategy in 2007. The developing world has been changing fast. Development policy and practices are also transforming, albeit at a slower pace. The divide between emerging economies and 'fragile states' is increasing. This is also the case in Africa. As not only Africa, but also the EU-Africa relationship is changing and evolving into new dimensions, there is clearly a need to develop a new European strategy, constructed on the basis of an emerging continent. Africa is home to the youngest population in the world and some of the world's most fragile states. However, it is also a continent with emerging markets and more effective governments. This brief aims to clarify how well the new Strategy must manage to mainstream a European approach to Africa that considers both the inter-continental dialogue and the diversity of development on this emerging continent within the fields of governance, security and migration. As the COVID-19 has turned into a pandemic, the brief also suggests that the new European strategy must reflect this development and the European Parliament should closely monitor the situation as it discusses the Strategy.

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1   Introduction

As not only Africa, but also the European Union (EU)-Africa relationship is changing and evolving into new dimensions, there is clearly a need to develop a new European strategy, constructed on the basis of an emerging continent. Africa is home to the youngest population in the world and some of the world's most fragile states. However, it is also a continent with emerging markets and more effective governments. Moreover, it has started to crack the code of state building. How and to what degree Africa will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic remains to be seen. We do not know yet how widely the virus will spread on the African continent, but what we do know is that the outbreak already has an enormous negative effect on the world economy. Africa is far more integrated into the world economy today than what was the case during the financial crisis of 2008 and is therefore much more exposed to the negative externalities that this will create. The new European strategy must reflect this development and the European Parliament should closely monitor the situation as it discusses the Strategy.

This briefing aims to clarify how well the new Strategy must manage to mainstream a European approach to Africa that considers both the inter-continental dialogue and the diversity of development on this emerging continent. The European Parliament should also consider the role of Member States in its discussion of the Strategy. In this regard, it is important to note that several Member States are currently also reviewing their Africa strategy and relationship to the continent. This includes not only important states in this regard such as France and Germany, but also small yet active and eager states such as Estonia. The success of a new EU Strategy will, therefore, not only depend on EU-Africa relations that reflects the diversity of the continent – Africa is not a country, and the African Union (AU) is not the EU – but also on intra-EU co-ordination with its Member States on a current or future profile for the African continent.

As the diversity and difference between African states increases, so the relationship between the EU and Africa will continue to evolve into new fields and partnership models. This is underlined in the new Strategy's focus on partnerships for green transitions and energy, digital transformation as well as sustainable growth and jobs. These are important pillars for a renewed EU-Africa relationship that is future-looking, but how this agenda for the future will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic must be considered. However, political dialogue on questions concerning governance, security along with migration and mobility will also remain important dimensions in new emerging EU-Africa relations.

Concerning security, this briefing will in particular consider the EU's involvement in the Sahel, including a thorough focus on EU operations in the peace and security realm. The Sahel brings international concerns about security, terrorism and migration which has pushed the region to the very fore of the EU foreign policy agenda. Consequently, this briefing will evaluate how the EU responds to current security risks and what appropriate work-sharing arrangements should exist not only between the Union and its Member States, but also its relationship with the AU and relevant regional bodies such as the G5-Sahel and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Some parallels will be drawn with the EU's approach to the Horn of Africa where similar security predicaments are at play in some Horn countries (see Council of the European Union, 2011).

Questions of governance are closely related to security issues in Africa. Democracy and human rights have been integral elements within the EU's foreign policy. This is also reflected in European Parliament resolutions (see for example European Parliament, 2017a) that called for an intensification of the political dialogue on democracy and human rights. This should also apply to the next step in EU-Africa relations. However, the current bifurcation of African development leaves the Union with the challenge of developing an approach to democracy and human rights in Africa that is context-sensitive as it must be relevant both for the developing states in Africa as well as the fragile states of, for example, the Sahel. This is a challenge, but it becomes even more of a challenge when one considers a recent backlash towards more repressive governments in some African countries. This means that the Union must fine-tune the

instruments in its toolbox in order to be a relevant and efficient promoter of human rights, including the rights of religious and sexual minorities as well as civil society and a liberal public sphere.

The question of migration and mobility will continue to inform and influence EU-Africa relations. The briefing will not only review the Commission's proposal on migration and mobility, but also discuss the degree to which this proposal and current programming in place can have the potential to align interests that at times vary considerably and cause friction as well as political conflict in this field of policy. This is another issue that has been the subject of much debate in the European Parliament (see for example European Parliament, 2017b).

The African responses to the new Strategy have varied, but comments given during a late February 2020 high level meeting between the EU and the AU in Addis Ababa suggest that while the EU-Africa relationship stands firm, there are still differences that will continue to mar intern-continental relations. Some AU officials made it clear that they do not need to be lectured on European values, while other AU representatives singled-out questions concerning international criminal justice, sexual orientation and identity, the death penalty and the centrality of the AU in African crisis response as possible points of political disagreements. Thus, there are issues in this relationship that must be treated carefully (see also Marks, 2020).

There is, however, a new alarming issue that will substantially affect both the EU, Africa and the inter-continental relationships, and that is the COVID-19 outbreak. Europe is currently heavily affected, while in Africa the pandemic is still in its infancy (at least with regard to detected cases). This will be a heavy burden on national governments, the EU and the AU. This means that the Strategy and the EU-African relation may become less of a priority as governments and intergovernmental organisations try to combat the virus. However, as the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General recently warned (UN, 2020) – this is a global pandemic. If the virus gets stuck in poor and fragile states without working health systems, this means that the virus will eventually return to places that have effectively stopped the spread. In this regard, there is a fellowship of destiny between Europe and Africa. Thus, while Europe may think it has enough with itself right now, this is not the time to neglect the relationship with Africa, but to strengthen it as part of Europe's fight to halt the COVID-19 outbreak globally and to protect itself. This line of thinking is also reflected in recent communications from the European Parliament. A joint statement from the chairs responsible for external policies in the European Parliament on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the EU's external action recently called for concerted EU action. In parallel, they stated that the Union could 'not forget the fact that the impact of COVID-19 on the weakest – including the least developed and in fragile, crisis and conflict-ridden countries – may be devastating' (European Parliament, 2020). This is an issue that the European Parliament would do well to follow-up on.

The briefing will be book-ended by a conclusion that sums up main findings, puts forward some main points for discussion and discusses the degree to which the Strategy is able to consider the inter-related nature of the Strategy's main pillars, as questions concerning governance and security also have important ramifications for development, humanitarian aid, climate change together with trade and investment – and *vice versa*.

The context: EU and Africa

Much has changed since the creation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy in 2007. The developing world has been changing fast. Development policies and practices are also transforming, albeit at a slower pace. The divide between emerging economies and 'fragile states' is increasing. This is also the case in Africa, where a process of economic and political bifurcation is taking place. While parts of Africa are in the process of growing out of underdevelopment, reflected in increasing income per capita as well as political stability, other countries are falling behind. Some countries also seem to degenerate into permanent conflict zones. These are the fragile states of Africa, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia and

countries located in the Sahel, characterised by weak and illegitimate governments, little state capacity, low levels of institutional autonomy together with numerous violent conflicts and insurgencies. The challenges facing by these countries are further exacerbated by rapid population growth and immense vulnerability to climate change effects (Bøås and Fjeldstad, 2020). These countries will be extremely vulnerable to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

This situation appears like a far cry from what we find in the more effectively governed parts of the continent, where governments have started to crack the code of state-building, by not only having a relatively steadfast monopoly on the use of violence, but also more systematic means of revenue collection by developing systems for taxing enterprises and ordinary citizens. Although this picture captures only the broad development trajectory of contemporary Africa, what we are currently witnessing is the dual face of state-building. The features of these two broad groups of African countries are different, but what unites them is a similar challenge of state-building in its most basic form by facilitating (Bøås and Fjeldstad, 2020):

- the enablement of legitimate and firm control by the government on the monopoly of coercion,

- the ability to collect revenue needed to maintain state stability, and

- the gradual increase of state legitimacy through the establishment of sustainable social contracts between the state and its citizens.

Regarding more fragile African states, the question is how to start this process. In the more effectively governed countries on the African continent the challenge is how to maintain the current level of success which will be sufficient to generate an adequate momentum to restrain possible backlashes. In both cases, Africa needs external support and partnerships, and the current COVID-19 pandemic will make this even more needed. The EU is in an ideal position to be Africa's preferred partner for trade, development and security, but this is a position that will not come automatically, as Africa's increasing economic potential is attracting interest from many players on the global scene. This is most evident with regard to the parts of Africa that are experiencing economic growth, but a similar trend of actor proliferation can also be witnessed in niche security markets (The Economist, 2019). One example is Russia's approach in the Central African Republic that includes barter arrangements as well as the presence of the Wagner group (a private Russian security company with close links to the state) (Hauer, 2018; Cafiero, 2020).

The Commission addressed this aspect in its most recent communication to the European Parliament and the Council (see European Commission, 2020a). The EU should certainly be in a privileged position as Africa's largest trade and investment partner. In 2018, total trade in goods between the 27 EU member states and Africa was worth EUR 235 billion. This represents 32 % of Africa's total and it compares favourably both to EUR 125 billion for China (17 % of Africa's total) and EUR 46 billion for the United States of America (USA) (6 % of Africa's total). EU Member states are also the most important source of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) to Africa. In 2017, they had FDI stock in Africa worth EUR 222 billion – more than five times either the USA (EUR 42 billion) or China (EUR 38 billion). The EU is also manoeuvring to become the main supporter of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with EUR 72.5 million to be mobilised by the end of 2020 (European Commission, 2020b).

Concerning the provision of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa, the EU and its Member States are also at the forefront. In 2018, they provided EUR 19.6 billion – 46 % of the total which Africa received. With regard to humanitarian assistance, the EU and Member States combine to form Africa's leading donor. Since 2014, the European Commission alone has allocated more than EUR 3.5 billion for humanitarian relief in Africa and the EU is currently preparing its next long-term budget. If the Commission's proposal is accepted, the new EU external funding instrument for the period 2021-2027 would have a global scope, but over 60 % of the funds available would benefit Africa (European Commission, 2020; AU-EU, 2019).

All of this should be advantageous to the EU in continuing to deepen its engagement with Africa in identifying mutual benefits and interests. However, there are also a number of challenges. Africa is not a single country and while what has been communicated so far by the Commission emphasises partnerships, it is mainly in the form of a continent to continent relationship. What this means given the different types of African countries still needs to be defined and operationalised in a context and conflict sensitive manner. In issue-areas such as the transition to a green economy and digital transformations, it is possible to foresee at least a relatively smooth policy dialogue with the more mature, developing African countries. However, in regard to issues-areas such as peace and governance that would include questions concerning multi-party democracy, individual political rights and gender equality, the potential for political differences to come to the fore is much more evident, and AU representatives has already made it clear that they do not need or want to be lectured on European values (see Marks, 2020).

Migration and mobility is clearly another possible contentious issue where interests are not necessarily easily aligned. Africa is the most youthful continent in modern history and while this is a continental trend, it is most dramatically evident in the more fragile states such as Mali and Niger in the Sahel. In Niger, for instance, each woman gives birth to 7.2 children. This extremely high birth-rate could see its population of about 22 million almost triple to 63 million by 2050, while in Mali the comparable figure is 6.23 children per woman which without some sort of checking would bring the current Malian population of approximately 18 million towards and possibly above 50 million as we approach 2050. The crucial question is what will be the livelihood of over 60 million Nigeriens and 50 million Malians? What jobs will be available? Will there be enough fertile land available to feed this population? These are the crucial questions and in this regard, it is not easy to find any answers or even references in the Commission's current communications. Nonetheless, it is certainly evident that this will be a defining issue not only for Africa, but equally for the future of EU-African relations. Managed migration and mobility between Europe and Africa will never be of the magnitude needed to have much effect on the demographic realities that will materialise, and a global economic recession caused by COVID-19 could lead to new waves of migrants heading north towards Europe.

Political dialogue: governance, peace and security as well as migration

The EU is still the preferred development partner for most African countries. Despite the much hyped growth in China-Africa relations and the fact that countries from other world regions have either shown a greater interest in Africa (e.g. India and other Asian countries) or have returned to the continent (e.g. Russia), the EU and Member States are still Africa's main donors and trading partners.

China's increased role in Africa has been heavily discussed over the last decades. However, it is important to keep in mind that this relationship is not entirely new. China is a long-established diplomatic partner with several African countries; a relationship that in some cases dates to African struggles for independence or was cemented just thereafter. China is not a completely new actor on the African continent. What was new was how China's role changed with the growth of the Chinese economy. The new strength of the Chinese economy and its need for natural resources to sustain its growth propelled China into a new role as leading investor in Africa. What China wants in Africa is, therefore, not so different from what other geopolitical actors are in search of (see also Hanauer and Morris, 2014):

- Access to natural resources, particularly oil and gas. Africa has become China's second largest source of crude oil, and Angola is its third largest supplier.

- Markets for Chinese goods, increasingly important, but this has also become a controversial issue as China has flooded some African markets with cheap products, leaving national producers without much of a market.

- Political allies in world affairs, in the UN system and elsewhere.

- Global stability: China wants stability and has increasingly come to see African conflicts as a potential threat to its economic interests in the word stability. This is one important reason which explains why Africa has increased its contributions to UN peacekeeping in Africa and to the AU.

As such, there should not be much of a mystery to China's involvement in Africa. It is yet another world power that attempts to increase its access to natural resources, market shares and political influence on the continent. However, China is attempting something really difficult: to combine an almost unprecedented commercial diplomacy with its political rhetoric of non-intervention (see Albert, 2017; Wu, Alden and Staden, 2018). China's claim of being another type of donor – a donor that provides aid without any conditionalities – may have won China some new government allies. However, the power imbalance that emerges in political and economic relations between relatively small African economies and China is increasingly recognised on the African continent as a challenge for African governments. China is also increasingly experiencing an exposition to the same criticism as other large external players in Africa. Political opponents do not see the Chinese principle of non-intervention at work, but Chinese aid and loans that arrives timely to support a government that is becoming unpopular. Civil society groups have become critical of China's influence over regimes that they believe are turning authoritarian, and labour unions complain about Chinese companies that use imported Chinese labour and Chinese managers that do not respect African workers' rights, leading at time to a criticism of China being just another exploitative neo-colonial actor, albeit without a colonial past. Thus, the new EU strategy and approach should take into account that (1) China will remain a large and influential actor in Africa, but (2) China is increasingly seen as and behaving like any other world power that seeks influence, resources and market share.

Recently, there have been some concerns that the COVID-19 outbreak would open up new spaces for Chinese influence in Africa. It is correct that China has stepped up its health diplomacy in Africa, creating online resources to share its experience, donating protective masks and testing equipment. The Chinese billionaire Jack Ma has also distributed 20 000 testing kits and 1 000 protective suits to each of the 54 states in Africa. Thus, as the United States is struggling to come to terms with the outbreak and Europe itself is hit very hard, it may seem that China has found another angle to increase its influence. However, this is far more complicated. In Africa as well, China is vulnerable to the criticism that its own negligence and censorship contributed to making COVID-19 a pandemic (Procopia, 2020). Claims are emerging that equipment sent from China are second hand, defect or counterfeit. This plays into popular pre-existing sentiments among the African population concerning the general quality of Chinese goods sold in Africa. Thus, in some countries like Ethiopia, with a visible Chinese presence, the popular rumour mill is working overtime with narratives about COVID-19 having been brought to the country by the Chinese (see Kelly, 2020). This is, of course, unfair, but all these elements show that China met difficulties in its attempts to step up its health diplomacy to gain more influence in Africa, and some of these difficulties cannot be easily overturned. China's current health diplomacy in Africa should be followed carefully and analysed, but the European Parliament should not jump to conclusions on this issue already. Rather, the European Parliament should consider how the Union could support African initiatives. It is true that African health systems are weak, with a limited capacity to deal with a pandemic: hospitals are few, the number of doctors per 100 000 citizens is low, and there are few intensive care units equipped to deal with lower respiratory tract infections. However, with the establishment in 2017 of the AU's Centre for Disease Control (CDC), the continent is institutionally more equipped to deal with a situation like COVID-19 than in the past. Strengthening the capacity of the AU's CDC is a pertinent issue that the European Parliament should support as a part of EU's approach to COVID-19 in Africa.

This suggests that while China in Africa may be a challenge to the EU, it is not an essential threat as there is a solid foundation for the deepening of EU-Africa relations. This is also the case in potentially more controversial fields such as governance, peace and security along with migration. However, this is a political dialogue that will be extremely demanding. Initially, the EU's norm-based external policies that at least rhetorically tend to emphasise universal values lead to a feeling among several governments in

Africa's more mature developing countries that the EU and Europeans have a tendency to lecture them (Omolo, 2019). If the EU is serious in its wishes for a partnership approach to Africa, it needs to find a way of balancing its norm-based approach with the pragmatism of a mutual partnership where even difficult issues can be discussed frankly without threatening the very basis of the relationship. In that case, the role of the European Parliament's inter-parliamentarian delegations for relations with African countries could be strengthened, and in particular the Delegation for Relations with the Pan-African Parliament.

The EU and Member States must be prepared to deal with African counterparts who rightly point out that they represent some of the fastest growing economies in the world with an equally rapidly rising middle class. This means that parts of Africa are no longer of interest to the world merely as a place to secure raw materials and sell cheap consumer goods. It is also increasingly becoming an attractive market for higher value-added products (Bright and Hruby, 2015). For several African countries ODA is of much less importance than it used to be (AfDB, 2017) and this in combination with the new interests in African markets has clearly improved the bargaining position *vis-à-vis* external actors, the EU and Member States included. This is one side of the external coin representing the bifurcation of development in Africa to which the EU and Member States' needs to show sufficient sensitivity.

The other side of this coin concerns fragile African states that represent important development potential, but also security partners for the EU. Countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger are some of the poorest and weakest states in the world. The fragility of these states is associated (to varying degrees) with instability, chronic violence, humanitarian crises and large-scale migration or displacement. As the key provider of ODA, humanitarian assistance and missions which are supposed to increase resilience to conflict, this confronts the EU with huge challenges. The lack of an institutional response capacity in these countries makes it difficult for EU interventions to succeed. This is obvious in the case of Mali and points to what we may call the 'fragility dilemma' (Bøås, 2019). This dilemma manifests itself in two different, but related ways.

Firstly, a state such as Mali is in desperate need of international assistance. However, it will be difficult to make traditional donor assistance work effectively there. The institutional and administrative response capacity is low, which means that there is only so much external aid that these countries can effectively absorb. Secondly, given that these countries are in such severe need of external assistance, one could be forgiven for thinking that an important donor such as the EU should have considerable influence there; but that is not necessarily the case. This is the fragility dilemma's other dimension. For example, in Mali most donors quickly become frustrated with the government and government leaders are often heavily criticised by members of the donor community for incompetence, mismanagement and their toleration of corruption. However, this does not necessarily lead to anything more than vocal criticism, simply because the donors see no real alternative to the regime in power. What this means in effect is that being defined as a 'fragile' state can be a bargaining asset when dealing with international donors, if they see no clear and credible alternative to those in power and position (see also Bøås, 2019). Handling the issue of fragile states in the Sahel poses a tremendous challenge for the EU as it seeks partnerships for peace and governance. Furthermore, this will also impact on its effectiveness in achieving partnerships on migration and mobility, as the most frequently used transit-migration routes towards Europe cross through the Sahel.

2   Security

The security situation in Africa illustrates the bifurcation of development that is taking place on the continent. Parts of Africa have become much more peaceful. Long-lasting civil wars such as the one in Angola have come to a conclusion. The Mano River Basin conflict zone that almost ripped apart small coastal West African countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone and also threatened to spill over into Ivory Coast and Guinea is a thing of the past (Bøås, 2015). While DRC has managed transition through the ballot-box with the loss of former President Kabila's favourite and the coming into power of opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi on 24 January 2019, the December 2018 presidential election was controversial. Martin Fayula was seen by many observers as the real election winner and as a result eastern provinces such as North Kivu continue to be 'powder-kegs' (UN News, 2019). Somalia is also still in a situation of insecurity and political precarity that constitutes a common security challenge for neighbouring countries, and for the AU and EU (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The crucial role of the Somali conflict as a wider security predicament was pointed by Council Conclusions on the Horn of Africa (see Council of the European Union, 2011) and this remains valid today.

However, the new conflict zone of Africa is to be found among the administratively weak and politically fragile states of the Sahel (Bøås, 2017, 2018, 2019). The Sahel confronts EU policymakers with a whole range of serious challenges: fragile states, poverty, refugees and migrants, Transnational Organised Crime (TOC) and jihadist insurgencies (Bøås, 2019) and it has been somewhat of laboratory for EU crisis response (see Bøås and Rieker, 2019). The question of state stability in the Sahel is, therefore, more prominent on the international agenda than it has ever been, with the magnitude of international assistance and interventions in various forms at an unprecedented level. The Sahel is therefore not only a valid case it itself, but it also has ramifications for EU operations in the field of security elsewhere in Africa.

While this situation is most evident in Mali, increased international attention and subsequent efforts by way of military and security approaches to crisis prevention are also present elsewhere in the Sahel. In Mali, the conflict that erupted in 2012 led to military interventions by France (first Operation Serval and later Barkhane), the African Union (AFISMA) and the United Nations (MINUSMA). These various international initiatives have also been supported by the deployment of an EU police-force and rule of law mission (EUCAP-Sahel) as well as an EU military training mission in Mali (EUTM). Only EUCAP-Sahel alone will spend over EUR 130 million in Mali and Niger between 2018 and 2021 (European Commission, 2019; EUCAP Sahel Niger, 2019). Despite all these efforts, the situation on the ground has gone from bad to worse. The conflict has spilled over from Northern Mali both to the centre of the country and over the border to Burkina Faso. Consequently, the EU and other concerned members of the international community fear a spill-over to other neighbouring countries such as Niger.

This is an unprecedented and unwanted turn in the EU/Sahel relationship. Historically, the EU did not have to pay that much political attention to this region. The EU's connection was largely defined as a traditional donor-recipient relationship. Politically, the Sahel was seen mainly as a neighbouring area to Europe that could be left to France, the former colonial power, to sort out if needed. This has changed a lot as European concerns for the combined challenge of Jihadi-inspired insurgencies, transnational organised crime (TOC) and transit-migration has pushed the Sahel to the very top of the Union's foreign policy agenda and caused a huge shift in the engagement of the EU and its Member States (Stambøl, 2019). What this new relationship between the EU and the Sahel illustrates is, therefore, how security concerns have also come to determine the formulation and implementation of other EU foreign policies, development assistance included (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019). This has consequences in that the Union needs to apply a better level of understanding as it seeks to make peace and security a pillar of its partnership with Africa.

Currently, security sector reform (SSR) constitutes the core of EU efforts to assist Sahel countries, to protect and restore state authority and to improve their border management. While the EU as a traditional provider

of ODA and humanitarian assistance has been present in the Sahel for a long time, the new programmes have a much stronger emphasis on SSR than hitherto. There may be good reasons to increase SSR assistance to Mali, Niger and other states in the Sahel. Nonetheless, the EU needs to ask itself not only what the Union as an external stakeholder believes that these countries need, but also what the balance should be between the priorities of external stakeholders such as the EU versus what is most important for the people that live in this region. The EU wants fewer northbound transit-migrants and the elimination of what Europe understands as a potential global terrorist threat, but this may not necessarily be the main priority for inhabitants of the Sahel. The youthful inhabitants of the Sahel (50 % of the Malian population is below the age of 18) are more concerned with the immense pressure that local livelihoods have come under lately and what this means in terms of their aspirations for better lives. The fact that conflict has become worse during the last seven years despite large-scale interventions by the EU, France and the United Nations should suggest a critical rethinking of external interventions that have increasingly taken a narrow security first approach (Bøås, 2018). This is very much needed as what is currently taking place in the Sahel is a multi-dimensional crisis that cannot easily be reduced to the challenge of Jihadi-inspired insurgents and northbound transit migration. This is an issue that needs much more critical reflection as the Union prepares to operationalise its new Africa Strategy. Moreover, it is a process that should start in close consultation with African partners and relevant regional organisations.

Sahel, the EU and regional organisation

The importance of regional organisation and integration is mentioned in the Commission (2020) communication on the new Strategy, but only as means to forward economic integration at regional and continental levels. This is a pity as it represents a failure to recognise that in Africa some of the most important contributions of regional organisations have not been in the field of economic integration (the level of intra-regional African trade is still quite low), but within the field of security (see Franke, 2009). This is, therefore, an issue-area well-suited for improved partnership between the EU, the AU and regional African organisations.

The potential and even need for improved collaboration with regard to regional security is illustrated by the precarious security situation in the Sahel, that is further exacerbated by the almost total absence of any functional regional arrangement that covers all the core Sahel countries. In contrast to the regional war zone that developed in the Mano River Basin during the late nineties, the Sahel has no clear regional body (i.e. ECOWAS), or a clear regional hegemon (i.e. Nigeria). The few regional bodies and communities that do exist are either dysfunctional or are severely hampered in their ability to execute policy by the old rivalry between Algeria and Morocco (Bøås, 2018), a situation unlikely to change in the immediate future.

This is the main reason why the EU encouraged by important Member States as France and Germany are placing considerable emphasis on a new regional arrangement, the G5 Sahel. This new regional body, created in 2014 by the leaders of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, will formally work to strengthen regional co-operation on security and development, aiming to identify common projects that focus on infrastructure, food security, agriculture and pastoralism as well as national security – important issues that host some of the root causes of conflict in this region.

External stakeholders in search of a regional framework have expressed considerable interest in the G5 Sahel initiative and it could become a new functional framework for security and development co-operation in the Sahel. However, if this is to take place, external stakeholders such as the EU need to realise that a regional arrangement is rarely more than the sum of the member states and the member states in question here are all relatively weak. Thus, alongside institutional support for the G5 Sahel, state capacity must also be strengthened in the member countries. This is not impossible, but it will be a slow and difficult process, with several setbacks likely. This is evident from the EU and international community engagement in Mali since 2013.

The danger, though, is not only that this process will be rushed by external stakeholders (who want to see swift results on the ground), but also that too much emphasis will be placed on narrow security parameters and far too little on development aspects of the G5 Sahel agenda. The EU seems particularly interested in the development of a police component within the planned G5 military force (Stambøl, 2019). Thus, external stakeholders such as the EU – who will have to bear most of the cost – are mainly interested in the G5 Sahel as an arrangement to put more 'boots on the ground'. Moreover, these 'boots' will be directed mainly toward the external priorities of improved border control, in order to reduce northbound migration flows and combat those defined (by the same external stakeholders) as jihadist terrorists – and thus a threat to global security. That would further contribute to turning the Sahel into yet another front in the global war or terror.

It is in the light of such priorities that we should interpret the pledge of half a billion dollars for a G5 Sahel military force. As Reuters (see Carbonnel and Emmott, 2018) reported from the meeting that took place in Brussels on 23 February 2018: 'The European Union, which believes training local forces will allow it to avoid risking the lives of its own combat troops, doubled its contribution to EUR 116 million'. Accordingly, there is every reason to be concerned that if this goes through, the G5 Sahel contribution will be framed by the same narrow security parameters as other ongoing EU and international community initiatives, at the expense of the G5 Sahel's development agenda, which at least contains some promise of tackling the real root causes of turmoil in the region. The EU pledge of support for the Sahel is thus in fact a pledge of support for European political stability and not necessarily for sustainable investment in a peace, reconciliation and development agenda for the region. This is an issue that the EU needs to rethink and rethink quickly if the goal is to achieve a more genuine partnership with Africa that embraces a larger development and security agenda that, while not ignoring hard security components, places more emphasis on a human security approach to the multidimensional crises that still exist in parts of Africa. This is evident in the chronic conflict zones of Eastern DRC, Somalia and increasingly also in the Sahel. Thus, a certain rethinking of current approaches is needed and the EU should take advantage of the work with the Strategy and link it to ongoing revisions of the Sahel and Horn of Africa strategies. If a new approach is not developed, the fragile, conflict-prone states and regions of Africa could find themselves navigating an increasingly chaotic myriad of international assistance programmes and SSR/military interventions. In such a quagmire, neither the EU as a donor nor the recipient countries would have the experience or know-how to manoeuvre new 'security and development' architecture. The EU should be aware that little is yet known about the (un)intended consequences that so many new policies and programmes could have on the ground in some of the world's most administratively weak and politically fragile states.

3 State-building: governance, democracy and human rights

Few questions have been more debated over recent decades in academia and development policy circles than state-building (see for example, Boone, 2003; Herbst, 1996; Migdal, 1988). Most of this literature has, though, been concerned about questions to do with the monopoly on violence, the issue of controlling borders together with the establishment, effectiveness and legitimacy of the legal system, than with the need for revenues to pay for such public services. The new EU Strategy is unfortunately not an exception. It states that 'Good governance, effective and inclusive economic, social, education and health policies, equal access to basic social services, equal access to fair redistribution of resources, equal access to justice and open and inclusive societies foster peace and security and act as a foundation for jobs and growth, attracting investment' (European Commission, 2020: 12). This may very well be the case, but how do we achieve those objectives.

The EU, as with other international donors, has tended to address this by providing money and resources in the expectation that this will lead to better state institutions and good governance, which will in turn reduce officials' perceived need for predation. However, research shows that such an approach simply does not work very well, particularly in the weakest and politically most fragile countries (Bøås, 2015; Fjeldstad,

2014; Hillbom and Green, 2019). At best, it provides an artificial life-support system that, while preventing outright state collapse, offers no opportunity for sustainable development. Rather, the key, long-overlooked element regarding weak and fragile states is fiscal capacity; that is, the ability to generate and manage government revenue domestically. This is the key to state-building, as the ability to collect the revenue needed to maintain state stability could under the right circumstances gradually increase the state's legitimacy through the establishment of sustainable social contracts between the state and its citizens. Unfortunately, the issue of partnerships for improved fiscal capacity and the establishment of functioning tax regimes is as yet not even mentioned in the Strategy. This is an opportunity missed, as not only are African countries increasingly interested in this issue-area and actively seeking partnerships as well as dialogue with external stakeholders, but it is also no longer a secret that Africa is losing substantial amounts of revenue through tax evasion and avoidance. According to a High-Level report issued by the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2020), the continent loses EUR 44 billion in illicit financial flows annually. This also includes resources lost due to tax evasion and avoidance efforts by European companies.

Taxation is, therefore, not only an integral part of the governance agenda that the EU seems to ignore in its quest for a new model of partnering with Africa, but it could also become an important pathway towards addressing other items on the governance agenda. It is an issue that African countries are increasingly interested in and they are not looking to China in this regard, but to European countries for assistance and partnership. This is an opportunity the EU should not miss as on an abstract level, the EU and African countries may be 'committed to promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms globally' (European Commission, 2020: 12). However, in the actual, detailed political dialogue on these issues, controversies often occur. While the quality of government – defined as the ability to plan, implement and analyse policy – has improved in most of Africa over the last decade, it does not mean that democracy defined as individual political and human rights has improved equally. Rather, some of the fastest growing economies in Africa seem in the short to middle-term to be developing politically along an alternative trajectory. This trajectory may best be defined as 'electoral authoritarianism', a type of political rule, where elections are held regularly and in line with the constitution. However, whilst there is no open electoral fraud, the entire political system is heavily bent in favour of the incumbent party and often the president.

These regimes grow in confidence due to their: (a) continued ability to rule; (b) impressive economic growth rates, combined with a certain success in delivering on the economic part of the Sustainable Development Indicators; (c) relatively reduced dependence on ODA from the EU; and (d) ability to replace aid from the EU with support from other and less demanding sources (e.g. China). This means that the EU needs to either find new instruments in its toolbox or fine-tune existing ones in order to promote dialogue on human rights and democracy issues. The time that the EU could lecture, dictate and see results from its instructions (if this ever was the case) belongs to a bygone era. With regard to the more mature and stable developing states of Africa, the EU needs to find a strategy of political dialogue that would also be of interest to the regimes of these countries. Addressing taxation and illicit financial flows as a core governance issue of sustained partnership could potentially be an important inroad for the discussion of issues concerning social contracts that would also have to include questions concerning political participation and freedom – in other words the human rights agenda in full. In these processes the European Parliament's Standing Inter-Parliamentarian Delegations for Relations with African Countries and the Delegation for Relations with the Pan-African Parliament could play an important role as it offers a potential for entertaining a frank, but also more informal dialogue.

4 Migration and mobility

The European Commission (2020, 13) rightly points out that 'demographic trends, the aspiration for economic opportunity and political stability, flight from crises and conflicts, and adaptation to climate change and environmental degradation, all means that the levels of migration and forced displacement will continue to pose both challenges and opportunities for our two continents'. Similarly, the Commission is also correct in its argument that well-managed migration and mobility can have a positive impact on countries of origin (for example remittance from the diaspora in third countries), transit (provide employment) and for destination countries (an aging Europe in need of a trained workforce in healthcare and other labour-intensive sectors). The question is how do we achieve results? How do we form a partnership concerning an issue where not only are European-African interests difficult to align, but the topic of migration is also an issue that tends to polarise both Member States and their respective electorates?

This is an issue-area where answers are faint and often amount more to wishful thinking than concrete policies that can be realistically implemented. It may be that the Union would be better served by undertaking a critical examination of existing practices in collaboration and partnership with the AU and concerned AU Member Countries. If so, the Sahel would be the place to start.

Since the 'European refugee crisis' of 2014-2015, policies implemented by the EU and individual Member States in the Sahel have reduced the number of migrants transiting through the region towards Europe. However, the sustainability of this approach should be questioned as it may also increase domestic tensions in politically fragile and administratively weak states, leading to increased pressure on political and social systems that are already struggling to stay afloat. The case of Niger is intriguing in this regard as it has become an integral part of externalising European migration management that has yielded results as the number of transit migrants is significantly reduced, but the same approach may have a number of other unintended consequences.

The EU concern about large-scale migration through the Sahel is not new. It started, albeit modestly, with the Cotonou-process of 2000. In Mali, migration management concerns have been part of the country's relationship with the EU since 2006 (see Lebovich, 2018). Mauritania also received considerable attention from the EU, led by Spain, from 2006 to 2009 as migrants travelled in small boats from the Mauritanian coast to the Canary Islands (see Fuchs, 2006; Bøås, 2017). Thus, neither migration itself nor EU attempts to manage migration in the Sahel are new phenomena. Irregular migration from Africa through the Sahel towards Europe has been taking place for decades during which the numbers of people transiting have waxed and waned.

However, the immense increase in the number of crossings during 2015 and 2016 through the Central Mediterranean Route did represent something new. This is the route that connects the Sahel and North Africa to Italy. According to Frontex (2017), the total number of migrants and refugees arriving on Italian shores and ports were about 40 000 in 2013, whereas this figure climbed sharply to approximately 154 000 in 2015 and peaked at over 181 000 in 2016. For most of the people who travelled the Central Mediterranean Route, Niger and Mali were the preferred transit countries. This was because many of these migrants originate from other ECOWAS member states, and as part of the ECOWAS Treaty, citizens of these member countries have the right to passage through all ECOWAS states. Thus, these citizens should be free to move all the way to the borders of Algeria and Libya. This is a right that the EU in effect has tried to undermine in Niger through encouraging the government in Niamey to introduce a new law on human smuggling.

In Mali, the city of Gao located along the northernmost bend of the Niger River was the main transit hub as it could be reached both by car and by boat, while Agadez emerged as the key transit hub in Niger. Gao had formerly been about as important as Agadez as a transit migration hub, but with the outbreak of

hostilities in Mali during 2012, preferences changed quickly as most migrants and refugees preferred to travel through relatively peaceful Niger rather than taking the risk on the war-affected area of Gao.

Thus, as the EU at least temporarily had succeeded in shutting down the Eastern Mediterranean Route through its agreement with Turkey, the Union started to search for new and innovative ways in which new as well as existing policies and programmes could be utilised to reach a similar sharp reduction in arrivals to Europe along the Central Mediterranean Route. The EU found a solution in the shape of EUCAP-Sahel, the European Trust Fund for Africa, and similar programmes that either already had a focus on security sector reform and improved border management or could be redefined for such a purpose.

This has consequences for the EU (see Stambøl, 2019; Bøås and Rieker, 2019) and for countries in the Sahel that are confronted with an EU, that to a larger extent than previously is pushing a new architecture of migration management as the main issue in its relation with the states of the Sahel. This is well argued and illustrated by scholars such as Brachet (2018), Cassarino (2018), Lebovich (2018), and Frowd (2020), who through detailed empirical analyses have improved our understanding of the changes taking place and how they have affected the relationship between the EU and countries in the Sahel. However, what has happened in the past and is still happening today not only has important ramifications for the EU and its external relations with the states of the Sahel, but may also have huge implications on the ground in the region's politically fragile and administratively weak states. As Julien Brachet (2018) has shown, the transport of migrants has been intimately connected to local economies and livelihoods and disrupting this economic activity will have consequences not just for local populations but may also transform informal migrant facilitating activities to proper transnational crime.

Thus, while the EU has tried to achieve some kind of intervention, in fragile states across the Sahel such as Niger, a transit migration hub like Agadez is transformed into a quasi-European border post. While this strategy has had some success – if success can be measured by fewer migrant arrivals on European shores through the Central Mediterranean Route – this initial success is not necessarily sustainable. The main reason for this is that, as with all other external stakeholders, the EU struggles to find the balance between narrow security concerns and a larger developmental agenda where military security is but one part of a larger equation (Bøås, 2019). In abstract terms, the EU knows what is required: the states of the Sahel need stability, transparency and legitimate institutions that can extract revenue from taxes, fees and duties to deliver economic development, services and make their countries more resilient to climate change effects (see Fjeldstad, Bøås, Bjørkheim and Kvarme, 2018). The EU at least in theory is also aware that its policies in such a fragile political environment as the Sahel should be context and conflict sensitive (Bøås and Rieker, 2019). The problem for the EU is how to achieve this in fragmented, conflict-prone societies where the very idea of the state has eroded, if not completely vanished. This takes place in a situation where the due diligence agenda of 'do no harm' quickly comes into conflict with the European regimes' other key interest, namely to reduce northbound migration as much as possible before these migrants reach Mediterranean shores.

The challenge that this constitutes is also obvious when we consider the track-record of the EU and international community at large in assisting state building efforts in fragile states. More often than not these efforts fall short of achieving their stated objectives and at times even make difficult situations worse, leaving countries on an artificial international life-support system. This may prevent total state collapse, but it certainly does not represent a sustainable path to recovery, stability, reconciliation and development. The EU and international community struggled with this even prior to the refugee and migration management crisis of 2014-2015, but the new and narrower focus thereafter has made it that much harder to imagine other and more sustainable solutions. This suggests that the current approach that seems to give priority to immediate EU interests in the long run may achieve the opposite effect. It would certainly not be without irony, albeit a tragedy to Niger, if an unintended consequence of externalising European

migration management contributed to undermining the stability of the regime that Europe depends upon for this purpose.

Thus, in order to bring about a real break with current practices and find the pathway to a partnership model with Africa that includes managed migration and mobility, the first step must be to conduct a much closer dialogue with the AU, regional organisations like ECOWAS, and relevant AU Member Countries. This must focus on what types of joint interests can be clearly defined in an issue-area that in practice far too frequently brings about a zero-sum game.

5 Conclusion

Africa and Europe exist in close geographic proximity and there are deep historical ties between the two continents. This is a doubled-edged sword for the EU as it is about to transform the Union's relationship with Africa into a partnership model based on a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa. The EU is Africa's most important partner for trade and investment, ODA and humanitarian assistance, but importantly EU Member States also have a history as former colonial masters. This is not a history easily forgotten in Africa and it is repeatedly brought to the fore, as for instance France is currently experiencing during its current military engagement in the Sahel through Operation Barkhane, which is increasingly being met with popular resentment. This is a consequence of local people not seeing any improvement in the security situation, but rather experiencing a deterioration. Similar issues came to the fore when AU representatives stated that they neither needed nor wanted to be lectured on European values. The EU should not drop its normative agenda of human rights, democracy and good governance, but it must be fine-tuned to the context and linked to issues of common interests. This brief has suggested that conversations on tax regimes and social contracts could be a useful vantage point.

As the EU seeks to transform its relationship with Africa, and thereby also Africa's relationship with Europe, it is ever more important that this is based on real dialogue. Dialogue with key African stakeholders such as the AU and important Member Countries, but also internally. EU Member States' interests are not necessarily completely uniform. Individually Member States also have economic and political interests in Africa and African stakeholders are very much aware of this. This means that if the new Strategy is to bear fruit, it must be based on internal EU co-ordination as well as close dialogue with African partners.

As this brief has tried to testify, there is substantial potential to take the EU-Africa relationship to a deeper level of engagement, but there are also several major hurdles that need to be overcome. Some are of such magnitude that it will take time, as interests are not easily aligned, if at all possible, in the short to medium term. The basic situation remains, though, that there are two continents in need of each other. The EU is a trade, investment and development partner that Africa still cannot do without, while the EU needs Africa both as a potential important emerging market and as a source of strategic natural resources. The EU and Africa also need each other in terms of security. The close geographic proximity to the Sahel means that too much trouble in this region will eventually also have ramifications for Europe. The US geopolitical interests lie elsewhere, China has no interest in stepping into this role and Russia can operate only in niche security markets. Accordingly, from an international community's point of view, it will be the EU and Europe that has to take the lead. If the COVID-19 pandemic really starts to spread in Africa, this will be even more the case. Europe and Africa are tied to each other geographically and historically and the outcome of the current pandemic will leave its mark on the EU-Africa relationship also in the field of governance, security and migration. In the best-case scenario, Europe is able to beat back the worst consequences of the virus and the EU, in close collaboration with the AU, regional organisations and African governments, are able to assist Africa to do the same. If this becomes the case, a new stage will be set for an even deeper agenda of inter-continental dialogue, ranging from the difficult issues of migration and security to global governance. In the worst-case scenario, Europe has enough with itself; prolonged struggles to fend off the pandemic in Europe lead to a severe economic recession, skyrocketing unemployment and political

instability. Thus, Africa is left to fend for itself mainly, or seek support elsewhere to combat the pandemic. This is a situation where China will attempt to step forward. This will not be the end of EU-Africa relations, but it will make it different and weaker as such a scenario will leave both continents much weaker than they were when the process of making the new Strategy started. As these processes are unfolding, no answers can be given, but the European Parliament cannot ignore what is going on in its deliberations on the Strategy. Issues and outcomes must be openly debated, and this is a time when Plan A, also needs a Plan B and a Plan C.

However, no matter the outcome of the above, the EU-Africa relationship will move forward. However, as this brief has pointed out, the degree to which the new Strategy will succeed in deepening engagement towards a more mutual partnership will also, independently of the COVID-19 pandemic, very much depend on how well the EU is able to: (a) combine a continent to continent approach with a context-sensitive approach that caters for the diversity that current bifurcation of Africa contributes to – Africa is not a country and the AU is not a co-ordinating body to the degree that EU is; (b) find pragmatic pathways to political dialogue with the more mature and self-confident developing states of Africa – identifying platforms of partnership based on joint interests will serve a norm-based agenda better than being seen as a 'lecture in European values' ; (c) prepare better conflict-sensitive strategies for Africa's more fragile states; and (d) acknowledge that the question of managed migration and mobility will continue to be difficult and controversial while simultaneously critically reviewing current attempts at migration management in the Sahel that may prove unsustainable in the long run. The long-standing relations established by the European Parliament through its delegations with African counterparts could play an important role in the dialogues that will be needed and the European Parliament should actively seek new and innovative ways of deepening its engagement with a wide range of relevant African partners, beyond African parliamentarian counterparts, civil society, but increasingly also business organisations.

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European Parliament

BRIEFING Nº2

A comprehensive EU Strategy for Africa Development, Humanitarian Aid and Climate Change

ABSTRACT

The new EU Strategy for Africa attempts to reflect the continent's growing relevance within a partnership rather than through a donor-recipient framework. However, this leads to a prioritisation of the formal, productive and technology sectors as well as climate mitigation at the expense of agriculture, informal sector, human development and climate adaptation. With such skewed priorities, this Strategy is ill-adapted for the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Institutionally, political will is needed to ensure that the continent-to-continent approach is not hampered by parallel, contradictory and fragmenting forces within the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) governance frameworks. Financially, mutual accountability must be strengthened by joint funding of joint actions. An inclusive institutional mechanism is also needed to promote political and civil society participation as well as policy coherence for sustainable development beyond migration and climate. More generally, the Strategy advances a government-to-government type of partnership at the expense of a more people-centred approach that is more in line with the 'principled pragmatism' of the EU.

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1   Introduction

The first trip of Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission to Addis Ababa clearly marked the rising geographical priority of Africa for European institutions and governments. However, it is not less significant that while in her speech she stressed the nickname 'Geopolitical Commission' for her College, she did not mention sustainable development or development *tout court* (Von der Leyen, 2019).

Von der Leyen also put emphasis on the 'spirit of a true partnership of equals' with Africa (Von der Leyen, 2019). Again, this is more trend than novelty. When it comes to matters of global development, the donor-recipient relationship was rhetorically replaced by the donor-partner relationship in the mid-2000s (High Level Forum) and the 2007 *Joint Africa-EU Strategy* (JEAS) already announced a move towards a 'real partnership characterised by equality' (Council of the European Union, 2007, p. 4).

Yet half of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa is still provided by the European Union as a whole. Sub-Saharan Africa alone receives more EU aid than the rest of Europe and the Middle East combined (OECD, 2020). At around EUR 20 billion a year, this makes the EU's nominal assistance to Africa the most important single aid flow globally.

In spite of cuts proposed by some member states during negotiations of the Union's new multi-annual financial framework, overall funding for Africa by the European institutions and member states will probably not decrease in the future. This fact alone, though, does not necessarily contrast with the disappearance of a 'traditional' development framing in the joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative 'Towards a comprehensive Strategy *with* Africa' (rather than *for* Africa, my emphasis) from 9 March 2020 (hereafter Strategy).

From a global, sustainable development perspective, which is the main lens of this briefing, two sets of questions stand out particularly:

- What type of framework replaced the 'traditional' donor-recipient perspective in the Strategy and to what extent is it fit to guide financial flows to the continent?

- To what extent are the priorities spelled out in the Strategy coherent with the goals of sustainable development?

The main message in this briefing is that the new Strategy's pragmatic shift paradoxically revives an outdated understanding of development with the main focus on its economic dimension, combined with the implicit assumption of spill-over and trickle-down to the social dimension in particular. As such, the Strategy's language seems to reflect the EU's 'principled pragmatism' fully, as set out by the 2016 EU Global Strategy: the values and principles, social and environmental aspects of the partnership with Africa are all there[1]. However, projection of the Commission's internal priorities for the EU is problematic: from climate change, digital transition and geopolitics, to its external relations with Africa. With the assumption of a 'true partnership', the EC obliterates deep inequalities, dependencies and diversity between and within both continents. This leads to side-lining issues emphasised by the African partners and hence once again to one-way agenda-setting that can be charged with hampering the EU-Africa relationship's previous implementation.

While the 'EU Strategic objectives' were already reflected in the 2017 Joint Communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership (EC, 2017), preceding inputs by the Commission and the European

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[1] Yet 'common values' and 'shared values' often mean only EU values (see Horký and Kratochvíl, 2014). Regarding the Strategy, this is certainly a case of non-discrimination in respect of sexual orientation, unlawful in the majority of African countries.

External Action Service (EEAS) maintained the objective of developing a people-centred partnership. In the age of rising global populism and authoritarianism, it is most worrying that this goal of responding directly to people's needs and concerns has entirely disappeared from the new Strategy. This is also in line with the previous Commission's 'radical shift' towards development of the productive sector by way of public guarantees for and blending with private investments in Africa (EC, 2018, p. 1).

It is on the basis of a comparison with previous strategy documents, the evaluation of their implementation and priorities set previously by the European Parliament and African stakeholders, that this briefing reviews the joint communication 'Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa' according to the main development issues and policy coherence, mindful of any relevance from the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

2 Sustainable development priorities

Prioritisation of certain issues in either bilateral or inter-regional development strategies is a necessary and welcome process as long as those priorities correspond to the donor's comparative advantage when compared with the partner's needs. In line with this, the *New EU Consensus on Development* covers the '5P' clusters of Sustainable Development Goals (people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership), while emphasising some of the EU's general priorities for all countries in the South and the European Neighbourhood (youth, gender equality, mobility and migration, sustainable energy and climate change, investment and trade) (Council of the European Union, 2017).

The new *EU Strategy for Africa*, though, marks a stark departure from many unfulfilled priorities in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that – for this very reason – remained key priorities as the subsequent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the UN's 2030 Agenda. The fact that the word 'poverty' appears only once in the 19-page Strategy, namely in an introductory reference to the number of people living under the poverty line, is a good illustration of this shift. In contrast, the section covering 'Key Development Issues: Accelerating Progress towards the MDGs' corresponds to 10 % of the JEAS' length.

The implicit attempt at rhetorically destigmatising Africa as an underdeveloped region and instead emphasising the continent's opportunities should not be underestimated. This bias may also be due to 'middle-income' priorities within the long-term Agenda 2063, acknowledged previously by the EU (European Commission, 2017). Yet Table 1 shows a clear pattern in the Strategy's peculiar understanding of development.

Table 1: Representation of sustainable development priorities in the Strategy

Sustainable Development Goal	Priority
1. No Poverty	Low
2. Zero Hunger	Low
3. Good Health and Well-being	Low
4. Quality Education	Medium
5. Gender Equality	Medium
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	Low
7. Affordable and Clean Energy	High
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	High
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	High
10. Reduced Inequality	Low
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	Medium
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	Medium
13. Climate Action	Medium
14. Life Below Water	Low
15. Life on Land	Low
16. Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	High
17. Partnerships to Achieve the Goal	High

The biggest emphasis is placed on the productive sectors whilst references to human development are not only less frequent, but they are also generally spread throughout the document, often as mere preconditions for economic growth. This is the case with health, well-being and the elderly in particular (EC, 2020, p. 10). The focus on youth and women, on the other hand, concurs with the priorities of both MEPs and African partners, but it could stand to be more mainstreamed throughout the Strategy. At the same time, human rights are seen as a precondition for security and development rather than a stand-alone principle (EC, 2020, pp. 11 and 12).

Moreover, disbalances between the relevance of economic sectors versus sustainable development are also present within the productive sector. While agriculture still employs about three in five Africans, with the consequences for food security, smallholder farmers are surprisingly never mentioned in the Strategy. The Informal sector, within which it is estimated that two thirds of Africans are employed, receives only

one acknowledgement as being undesirable and ready for transition towards the formal economy (EC, 2020, p. 10). Although small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are mentioned, this is only in relation to 'space private sector' (EC, 2020, p. 5). There is also excessive overrepresentation of digitalisation[2]. While this topic takes up a page and a half, it does not mention its potential benefits for enhancing people-to-people contact as a standalone value, but it is understood merely as a tool, especially for businesses. But again, the more general problem of literacy is mentioned only with regard to digital literacy (EC, 2020, p.5).

Also missing in the Strategy are other key topics that have recently been jointly emphasised in the Abidjan Appeal by European and Pan-African parliamentarians. Most importantly, electrification and infrastructure developments are barely covered. This is also the case with industrialisation as well as 'management and traceability of natural resources, and equitable allocation of revenues', for example, another 'elephant in the room' of the African political economy and ecology with direct consequences on livelihoods (EC, 2020, p. 2). As another example, the Strategy's only references to urban environment are 'smart urbanisation' and 'green cities', which overlooks the fact that around half of urban Africans still live in slum conditions.

Overall, analysis of the Strategy's contents reveals a strong disbalance in that emphasis is being placed on the economic aspects of sustainable development at the expense of social and environmental concerns (with the exception of climate change mitigation). While the Strategy rightly acknowledges the urgent need to create jobs for the young generation of Africans, there is nevertheless a disproportionally marginal focus on existing productive areas such as agriculture, informal trade along with mining and industry that are all characterised by being low value-added, but still crucial in terms of employment and government income. On this issue, a relatively recent EP resolution from 16 November 2017 on 'EU-Africa Strategy: a boost for development' presents a much more balanced view and does not shy away from 'old-fashioned' topics such as poverty eradication and sustainable industrialisation (EP, 2017, p. 5). Even the initial 2017 EC/EEAS contribution had a more social view of job creation for the African youth.

3   Security-development nexus

The Strategy has very little to say about humanitarian aid, which still represents about one tenth of ODA provided to Africa. It is mentioned and repeated only in four normative, almost identical expressions alongside development as well as peace and security interventions, which are all framed by resilience (EC, 2020, pp. 13, 14 and 19). This security-development nexus, also a part of the policy coherence agenda, must be clearly explained beyond a simple promise to take the issue into account during future decisions.

In these times of extreme weather conditions caused by the climate crisis, it is surprising that the issue of cooperation on disaster risk prevention and mitigation is missing entirely, while it was explicitly mentioned in the 13 years old JEAS (Council of the European Union, 2007, p. 16) and reiterated in the New EU Consensus on Development (Council of the European Union, 2017, p. 34).

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[2] This is shown by one of the rare references to SDGs, which does not seem to be based on sufficient evidence: 'The acceleration of the digitalisation of public administration is a necessary pre-condition to create value for citizens and businesses across Europe and Africa and an *essential element* to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals'. (EC 2020, p. 5, my emphasis).

4 Climate change adaptation and mitigation

Cooperation on climate change as a topic, by contrast, is well developed in the Strategy – this corresponds to the high political priority given to climate change by the Commission internally. It is a stand-alone topic within the 'Partnership for green transition and energy access' and it is also mainstreamed throughout the rest of the paper. The EU's support for National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) of African countries is rightly acknowledged.

However, four issues related to climate change are underdeveloped. Firstly, there is a disbalance between climate change adaptation and mitigation, to the benefit of the latter. Despite recent increases in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from Africa, both historic and current African emissions are a relatively minor problem compared with those in the EU as well as other traditional and emerging industrial powers. In contrast, along with Oceania, Africa is probably the continent that will need most investments in climate crisis adaptation.

Secondly, within climate change mitigation, the issue of GHG emissions is more accentuated than the issue of GHG absorption and retention. While the role of forests in mitigating climate change is indirectly recognised, the risk that losses from ecosystem depletion would outweigh gains in carbon energy efficiency is not tackled at all. This risk may also be increased through increased food production, an issue of policy coherence which is particularly acute in equatorial rainforests.

Thirdly, the focus on particular sources of energy is somewhat random. While the Strategy emphasises Africa's potential for hydrogen production and warns against further development of coal power generation, it is silent about transitional sources such as natural gas. Despite the high potential for export to Europe from North Africa, solar energy is also surprisingly absent. In line with this, the social issue of energy accessibility as an integral part of SDG 6 'Affordable and clean energy' is also entirely missing.

Finally, the issue of cooperation in climate diplomacy is treated more as a fact of the past than a commitment for the future, directly in line with 'Proposed Action 10 – Partner with Africa to strengthen the international rules-based order and the multilateral system, with the UN at its core' (EC, 2020, p. 17). With this last exception where the EU's interests are not emphasised enough, in general terms the prism of the EU's immediate business interests again leads to a mismatch between issues that are not only important for Africa, but also eventually for Europe. This is specifically the case with climate adaptation and its link to environmental migration, for example.

5 Migration and development

Comparing the 2020 EC/HR Strategy with the 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JEAS) – which by its very nature reflected better African priorities – signals a very slight withdrawal of the Migration and Development agenda (it had a separate chapter in JEAS [pp.15-16]). Most importantly, the current Strategy does not mention the continuing problems resulting from the 'brain-draining' of health and education professionals from Africa to Europe. Migration is not (rightly) seen as a positive phenomenon in essence, but only as something potentially positive under the condition of effective management (as far as migration can be managed).

As compared with the period preceding the 2015-16 European migration crisis, more emphasis is put on return and re-admission policies, but the overall treatment of migration is very balanced and general, with the necessary human rights together with humanitarian and international law safeguards.

In relation to the migration-development nexus, two issues arise. Firstly, there is nothing about the potential migration-related conditionality of EU aid provision, even in a 'more for more' mode (see also Part 7). Secondly, the document seems to propose an upgrade of the project-based Migration and Mobility Dialogue in a 'joint framework' and it re-emphasises the existing political processes (EC, 2020,

p. 16), yet it remains vague on the preference of multilateral and bilateral arrangements with complementarity and added value as the sole guidance.

Overall, while generally keeping the language agreed for the Migration and Development agenda, the Strategy is (probably intentionally) vague, which raises questions about use of the migration issue as a bargaining chip with African countries and what the EU can really offer in terms of facilitating legal migration and people-to-people contacts for Africans. In this regard, the absence of Erasmus+ as a flagship programme for EU internal integration is striking in spite of the previous launch of *African 'Erasmus'* (EC, 2018, p. 7).

6   Institutional compatibility and funding

It was rightly emphasised that there is a tension between the 'desire for European leadership on multilateralism' and 'linkages between internal and external policy across all portfolios' (ECPDM, 2019, p. 2). This has led to the present paradox where a positive appreciation of the African Union (AU)-EU-United Nations (UN) alliance coexists with a negative selectivity from the sustainable development agenda in EU-Africa relations. This relates, though, more to the funding priorities in regard to diverse development issues than to the whole institutional framework.

Much has also been written and said about competing frameworks within the strengthening EU-AU continent-to-continent approach versus the outdated post-colonial EU-former colonies EU-ACP format. Furthermore, following Brexit the related problem of 'budgetising' the European Development Fund (EDF) into the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) has yet to be resolved. The Strategy claims only that 'coherence will be ensured' between AU-EU and ACP-EU formats by 'building on the existing governance structures' (p. 17), which is (i) easier said than done and (ii) still extremely vague in a situation where trade and development relations with North African countries are governed through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the inter-governmental Union for the Mediterranean. Proposed sub-regionalisation of the post-Cotonou agreement does not resolve these contradictions.

From a development perspective, four points can be made in relation to the European Parliament's role. Firstly, continuing the current AU-ACP coexistence is harmful to the sustainable development agenda. The 'short-term governmental gains or vested interests' of some African countries (Medinilla, A. and Teevan, 2020, p. 21) as well as the institutional path-dependence of the European institutions limit the political will to abandon, once and for all, the post-colonial ACP format, which is becoming even more outdated given the large majority of EU member states without direct colonial experience. It is exactly this coexistence of two parallel structures that enables the pragmatic and more or less equal inter-governmental EU-AU relations at political level to be simultaneously accompanied by MDG-like, donor-recipient depoliticised relations at implementation level. If conservation of the legal, inter-governmental EU-ACP framework was inevitable, at least 'budgetisation' of EFD into NDICI would be a minimum requirement for increasing coordination and coherence of procedures and flows to Africa as a whole.

Secondly, and related, the European Parliament has repeatedly acknowledged positive and highly appreciated experience within the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) to increase the democratic legitimacy of the partnership (e.g. EP, 2019). However, ways should be found to strengthen democratic scrutiny beyond the EU-ACP format and extend it into the continental framework. Inclusion of North African parliamentarians and upgrade of the JPA's mandate to EU-AU format is highly desirable. If not viable, joint sessions of ACP-EU JPA and the Parliamentary Assembly-Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM) could provide a partial remedy to the missing democratic base of pan-continental parliamentarism. It is characteristic that the Strategy does not even mention parliaments as a legitimate part of the AU-EU governance structure, but only as a part of civil society (EC, 2020, p. 17). Yet, as this analysis concludes, 'consolidating the political dialogue between the EU and Africa to ensure a *people-focused* partnership' is

indeed a crucial element to mitigate the disbalances within the Commission's current approach to EU-Africa relations (EP, p. 7, my emphasis).

Thirdly, in terms of funding, it is not surprising that this investment-oriented Strategy sees the NDICI mainly as a tool for leveraging private capital through guarantees and blending (EC, 2020, p. 8). There can never be joint action and equal cooperation with mutual accountability without joint financing. African countries are starting to mobilise domestic resources for their Pan-African Programme (PANAF) to fund the African Union; meanwhile, the NEPAD Agency recently transformed itself into the African Union Development Agency (AUDA). Similar structures are non-existent in the EU-ACP framework.

Fourthly and finally, other bilateral sources of finance on the EU and AU sides are also absent. The incapacity of EU member states to keep their promises in increasing ODA has led to a complete silence about their financial commitments. In comparison, the JEAS even promised to earmark their 50 % ODA increase to Africa. On the African side, quite unexpectedly and unlike repeated reference in the preceding paper (EC, 2017, p. 9-11), the new Strategy mentions the important issue of cooperation on mobilisation of domestic resources through taxation only indirectly from an illicit financial flow perspective (EC, 2020, p. 10). The time of debt cancellation is over and 'debt management' is again mentioned as an internal good governance issue for African countries from a neoliberal perspective (EC, 2020, p. 10).

Overall, it could seem that the unresolved coexistence of the ACP-EU and AU frameworks may create a complementarity between the pragmatic and people-centred approaches, respectively. In reality, though, the division of labour between policies on the one side and the main source of finance to implement them on the other side, creates tensions that paralyse the future of EU-AU relations, mainly by impeding joint actions with joint funding.

7   Policy coherence for sustainable development

With only limited public and private funding to implement the SDGs within a short ten year period from 2020, progress on strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development has been recognised as a stand-alone Sustainable Development Target (SDT) 17.14 and an indivisible part of the sustainable development agenda at many levels. Regarding the difference in various recent documents advanced by the European Commission, there are few explicit references to coherence. Most closely to the meaning of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is the following 'blurry' declaration:

> Corresponding to the 'policy first' principle, the EU should deploy its instruments in full alignment with EU external policy objectives, standards and rules, and in coherence with internal policies (EC, 2020, p. 18).

This is in stark contrast to the 2007 JAES where coherence is referred to 14 times, with explicit commitments to treaty-based Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) in the areas of food security and fisheries (EC, 2020, pp. 16 and 17). In reality, this relevance gap is even wider since PCD. The internal-external coherence, or consideration of trans-boundary effects, is only one PCSD dimension. The other dimensions like the coherence of the three economic, social and environmental components of sustainable development, the inclusion of non-state actors in implementation and the vertical governance from multi-lateral to local level (OECD, 2018) are not tackled.

Unfortunately, European institutions seem to consider the issue of coherence as being purely to do with development. This is apparent from the differences between their 2017 documents. While the *New EU consensus on Development* has a separate subchapter that emphasises the complementarity of PCD and PCSD and reaffirms the commitment to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) (Council of the European Union, 2017, p. 50), it is entirely absent in the parallel input for EU-Africa relations (EC, 2017). The predominance of an EEAS perspective over a development perspective in the new Strategy is apparent.

PCSD also includes coherence between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This analysis has shown that there is a strong imbalance between economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in favour of economic issues. To add another example, 'inclusive social protection systems, universal health coverage, access to quality health service' are primarily linked to a 'healthy workforce' (EC, 2020, p. 11) and 'basic health care' is linked only to investments (EC, 2020, p. 11).

Moreover, commitments to coherence with EU policies that are not part of the 2030 Agenda, such as the human rights policy, are equally unclear. The Strategy vaguely commits to 'integrating good governance, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and gender equality in action and cooperation' (EC, 2020, p. 13), yet lacks clarity in regard to the EP's 'strict respect' of values and principles in aid conditionality (EP, p. 7) as well as the rebuttal of conditionality in 'migration matters' (EC, 2020, p. 14). For example, the JEAS explicitly 'trickled down' governance issues as far as making them part of EDF programming (Council of the European Union, 2007, p. 90). It can be said that the only issues with good mainstreaming of policy coherence are those of Migration and Development along with (not surprisingly) green transition.

Trade and investment issues, by contrast, are seen as unproblematic while predictive models show that African countries have little to earn in terms of development from the liberalisation of their trade relations with the EU. Nothing could be further from the truth (Tröster et al., 2019). Coherence between the three sustainable developments is simply assumed by claiming the EU's support to 'environmentally, socially and financially sustainable investments that are resilient to the impacts of climate change' (EC, 2020, p 19). While the support to African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is acknowledged, no mention is made of support for developing regulative frameworks, one of the EU's comparative advantages, to limit a 'race to the bottom' particularly in social and environmental areas.

A last note relates to the institutional framework of PCSD that should also be reflected in the Strategy. The PCD evaluation commissioned by the European Commission (Núñez-Borja, 2018) has shown, *inter alia*, that possibly the only tangible impacts of implementing policy coherence concerned adjustment of the EU's fisheries policy to support the livelihoods of Mauritanian fishers. The report conceded, though, that this change in the EU's policy was rather due to objections from the Mauritanian government than the EU's allegiance to PCD. This example emphasises the importance of going beyond verbal commitment to policy coherence by setting up an explicit framework for evidence-based political and policy discussions with direct participation on an equal footing of the partners and stakeholders concerned.

8 Relevance for post-COVID-19 pandemic

Challenges resulting from the current COVID-19 outbreak will be a good test of the Strategy's relevance for now and for the future. In fact, there is no particular need to mainstream the pandemic's relevance throughout the paper because the Strategy's shortcomings in terms of tackling human development are only being exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. While health is largely missing in the Strategy, the addition of a partnership with Africa on health is not a solution to check the COVID-19 box. From a long-term perspective, other dimensions of human development such as nutrition, education and gender equality are not less interlinked with health and they must be elaborated on equally. On a more positive note, it needs to be acknowledged that the Strategy *has* learnt lessons from Ebola, in explicitly mentioning the issue of mitigating disease outbreaks by emphasising related ex-ante capacity and infrastructure development (EC, 2020, p. 9). Physical distancing has also increased the relevance of digitalisation, although the problem of affordable access to digital infrastructure is downplayed.

Otherwise, measures to tame the pandemic as well as the disease itself are most likely to affect very large African populations. However, particularly mindful of the malnourished, informal workers, slum-dwellers, pupils and students, elderly people, the chronically ill from both infectious and lifestyle diseases, their

problems are not tackled at all by this Strategy. The lack of commitment to humanitarian aid, in other words general ex-post responses to humanitarian crises, also applies to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Ebola outbreak led to better preparation for health crises in many countries, the current pandemic has also shown the importance of universal health coverage and robust health infrastructure globally, issues that remain at best marginal in a Strategy for a continent with the most vulnerable country systems.

Since this Strategy overlooks the structural conditions of economic inequalities such as state capacity, tax issues and public debt, the EU's immediate responses to an expected economic slowdown can only be short-lived. While the Strategy rightly slides towards investment-led approaches, the explicit lack of underlying financial commitment from the EU will now be much more relevant than during the previously expected period of economic growth. Moreover, even without this current pandemic, the Strategy has not learnt from the 2011 global food crisis, by not addressing adequately the issues of food security and the role of local agricultural production in Africa. Finally, it is still too early to estimate the pandemic's long-term effect on the rate of (de)globalisation. In any case, the Strategy's top-down and trickle-down economic approach is at odds with supporting nation-led, localised and grassroots development, industrialisation and solutions for Africans.

9   Conclusions and recommendations

The joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative 'Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa' sees Africa as the strongest ally in regard to the EU's interests. There is a belief that European interests are best served in a global rule-based political and economic order, in cooperation with the United Nations. At first sight, it seems that this geopolitical vision would be beneficial to the sustainable development agenda, the flagship of current multilateralism alongside the global framework to tackle climate change.

However, the rhetorical shift towards *de iure* equality with Africa has come at a price. It has shielded from sight *de facto* inequalities between both continents and diversity within Africa, as if the continent were composed only of middle- and higher middle-income countries. It has assumed that the EU's own priorities for Africa are relevant, without paying much attention to the impacts that these policies may have. Promoting digitalisation rather than sustainable agriculture may very well lead to an increase of inequalities in Africa – it is not surprising that inequalities and SDG 10 are absent from the core text of the Strategy: the Commission's emphasis on trade and investments assumes trickle-down effects, which is far from the SDGs promise to 'leave no one behind'.

In other words, the Strategy reads like something for the African governments rather than African people at large. While the focus on creating jobs for the African youth is laudable, development in terms of digital skills and higher education is still more directed towards the middle classes, without concrete recipes to make African growth inclusive. In combination with competing institutional EU-AU and ACP frameworks, there is a clear tension between the pragmatic BRICS-style government-to-government approach and the 2000's MDG-style 'normative power Europe'.

This institutional lock-in does not make it easy for the EU's 'principled pragmatism' to take real shape, not that the EU identified in the Strategy is replaceable with any other traditional or emerging power. However, its values and principles now seem to be reduced to a 'do not harm' approach. The 'Southernisation of aid' is a global trend (Mawdsley, 2018). But the joint communication 'Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa' threw out the baby of the EU's people-centred approach and identity with the bathwater of a hierarchical global development framework.

Return of the people-centred approach is a condition for restoring a positive formulation of the EU-Africa partnership simply because it is a real shared concern on both continents. While there is an ongoing call by Africans for the accountability of their governments, the EU is itself being criticised for a 'democratic

deficit' and the track record of the partnership in terms of promoting political and civil society participation, is bleak[3]. This goes hand in hand with proposing a setup of new and specific institutional mechanisms, including policy coherence, to increase participation from the EU and at EU level through the member states down to European and African citizens to reflect on their common priorities and divergences in the relationship[4].

The European Parliament now has the opportunity of rebalancing priorities from the joint communication 'Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa' as follows:

1. In terms of partnership, develop new and/or renewed institutional mechanisms for an **increased participation** from continental to subnational level in the partnership. While the past positive EU-ACP parliamentary experience must be enhanced to EU-AU level, mechanisms to include civil society must be equally formulated and protected.

2. In terms of the development model, balance economic development primarily with its **social aspects**, and private sector development with public sector capacity building. Human development at large, the provision and resilience of public health services, the agricultural sector, physical infrastructure and energy affordability must be covered by the new Strategy.

3. In terms of humanitarian aid, elaborate on the security-development nexus as well as disaster risk management and mitigation. The COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered the problem of resilience and the **crucial role of the states' preparedness for crisis** in Europe and Africa alike.

4. In terms of the climate change policy, **emphasise adaptation policies** alongside mitigation policies. Put social benefits of fossil energy in perspective with the low African GHG emissions and elaborate on the protection of natural habitats for retaining carbon dioxide in biomass.

5. In terms of the institutional framework, subordinate any follow-up to post-Cotonou agreement to the **continent-to-continent approach**, including the inter-parliamentarian dimension. If parallel ACP- and ENP/UfM- based legal structures remain, make sure that EDF is 'budgetised' into NDICI and that EU implementation procedures towards African countries converge.

6. In terms of funding, give preference to **joint financing** and renew support for the African partners to mobilise national and international resources, through better taxation particularly. In spite of unequal capacities, mutual accountability cannot be ensured otherwise.

7. In terms of policy coherence, propose an **inclusive institutional mechanism for PCSD** and mainstream coherence beyond migration and climate. Focus on youth and gender equality also needs to be mainstreamed through the document.

8. In terms of timing, the current COVID-19 pandemic and its expected impacts serve only to underline the Strategy's need to emphasise **people-centred solutions** for Africa. Trickle-down effects of globalisation do not work with economic growth and increasingly so without it.

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[3] The people-centred partnership as a JEAS objective was reemphasised by the Africa-EU Civil Society Forum (2017).
[4] This appeal is in line with many recommendations made previously to the European Parliament by Pirozzi et al. (2017) – practically none were reflected in the new Strategy by EC and EEAS.

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European Parliament

BRIEFING Nº3

A Comprehensive EU Strategy for Africa Trade and Investments

ABSTRACT

The new European Commission (EC) is putting EU-African relations to the fore. A *Joint Communication of the EC towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa* stresses the African Continent's strategic importance and the EU's need to strengthen its partnership with (and not for) Africa. Proposals in the Joint Communication maintain promotion of sustainable investments with Africa on top of the EU's agenda. Partnership with Africa to attract investors and boost regional as well as continental integration are specific actions aimed to attain sustainable growth and jobs in African countries. This emphasis is not new, being in line with a geopolitically oriented Commission and the European Union's (EU) trend of shifting from a Donor-recipient model to a relationship based on mutual cooperation, pursuing common interests and mutual benefits. As the COVID-19 pandemic takes hold in Africa during 2020, it is becoming more urgent that EU and African relations post COVID-19 be tailored to a new scenario and show tangible action using partnership rhetoric.

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1. Introduction: progress towards a new comprehensive strategy with Africa

In a context of increasing attention to EU relations with Africa, on 9 March 2020 the European Commission presented a Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, which contained proposals for defining a new strategy. This communication is another step in on-going discussions to define a **new comprehensive EU Strategy with Africa**, jointly with African Partners, at the upcoming 6th EU-African Union (AU) Summit. This Summit is scheduled to be held in Brussels during October 2020, but likely to be postponed because of the coronavirus crisis.

The Communication contains initial elements of a future Strategy and proposes building a strategic alliance with Africa based on partnerships in five key global trends: green transition and energy access, digital transformation, sustainable growth and jobs, peace and governance along with migration and mobility. It proposes ten actions, related to the five partnerships as shown below (Table 1).

Table 1: EC Joint Communication proposals (2020)

Partnerships/key areas	Proposed actions
I. Green transition and energy access	**#1** Partner with Africa to maximise the benefits of green transition and minimise environmental threats in full compliance with the Paris Agreement
II. Digital transformation	**#2** Partner with Africa to boost the continent's digital transformation
III. Sustainable growth and jobs	**#3** Partner with Africa: to bring about substantial increases in environmentally, socially and financially sustainable investments that are resilient to the impacts of climate change; to promote investment opportunities by scaling up the use of innovative financing mechanisms; and to boost regional and continental economic integration, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. **#4** Partner with Africa to attract investors by supporting African States in adopting policies and regulatory reforms that improve the business environment and investment climate, including a level-playing field for business. **#5** Partner with Africa to produce rapid enhancements in learning, knowledge and skills, research and innovation capacities, particularly for women and the youth, protecting and improving social rights and eradicating child labour.
IV. Peace and governance	**#6** Partner with Africa to adapt and deepen the EU's support to African peace efforts through a more structured and strategic cooperation, with a particular focus on regions where tensions and vulnerabilities are at their highest **#7** Partner with Africa on integrating good governance, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and gender equality in action and cooperation **#8** Secure resilience by linking humanitarian, development, peace and security interventions at all stages of the conflicts and crises cycle.

V. Migration and mobility	**#9** Partner with Africa to ensure a balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach to migration and mobility
	#10 Partner with Africa to strengthen the international rules-based order and multilateral system, with the United Nations (UN) at its core

Source: own elaboration from EC (2020)

Other **general ideas** from the proposal are as follows:

- The continent is demonstrating economic expansion and a growing potential to boost social and human development.

- Young people and African women are the main drivers for sustainable growth, development and peace.

- Other world players' increasing interest in Africa is welcome, offering more opportunities for synergies and broadening Africa´s options.

- As the EU and Member States are already Africa's main partners in many respects, the partnership must be translated into a strong political alliance.

- Common action is needed on global multilateral affairs.

Specifically regarding **trade and investments** as well as other economic related issues, the main ideas refer to:

- A proposal covering joint action to launch a decent job creation scheme (Partnership III) could be enhanced by (i) boosting trade and sustainable investments (public and private), (ii) improving the investment environment, (iii) quality education, skills, innovation (among others) along with (iv) regional and continental economic integration.

- A proposal to turn the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs of 2018 into the main pillar of EU-Africa economic relations.

- A more coordinated approach by EU financial instrument controllers and European development finance institutions to increase the mobilisation of private investors and encourage development of the private sector in Africa.

- The message that the EU and Africa share a common interest in a stable multilateral trading system ruled by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Special attention is given in the Communication to **digital transformation** (that is to say the impact of applying new technologies to business on people and firms). Although the development of Africa´s digital economy is evolving quite fast, it still faces many constrains. Digital sector jobs require specific education and skills. Also, African countries need to continue progress in access to electricity and broadband connectivity. In addition, access to capital for African investors and public investment is needed. In specific sectors, as e-commerce, postal services reliability and many African cities lack of an address system.

In brief, proposals in the EC's Joint Communication towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa place at the top of its agenda the promotion of sustainable investments. Partnering with Africa to attract investors, thereby boosting regional and continental integration are specific actions to attain sustainable growth and jobs in African countries. This emphasis is not new and is in line with the EU's trend to shift from the Donor-recipient model to a relationship based on mutual cooperation in pursuing common interests and mutual benefits. In this sense, development cooperation continues to play a role, but trade and investments have been commonly agreed by both sides to play a more important role in the future.

Although the EU-Africa Strategy has yet to be defined, the current COVID-19 crisis, that will hit hard Europe and Africa, is revealing different needs and will create new priorities for both Africa and the EU. Although there are good grounds for some needed issues, like gender and youth, some 'old' topics that were on top of the African agenda, such as tackling illicit finance flows, are missing. In the post-COVID-19 scenario, new priorities will arise, not only related to health infrastructure, but also the need for transformation of the continent by building regional value chains, economic diversification and industrialisation. Special attention will be also needed in the services sector, which paradoxically receives the least capital but creates the most jobs, and other sources of job creation.

2. Economic ties between Europe and Africa

The EU is still Africa's biggest trading partner, but other global actors are racing to catch up. The EU and Member States also account for most Foreign Direct Investments (FDI flows) in Africa, but companies from other developing economies are becoming increasingly active.

2.1 EU-Africa trade relations and regional trends

From a continental perspective, Africa's main trading partner is by far the EU, both for export and imports of goods. In 2018, total trade in goods between the 27 EU Member States and Africa was worth EUR 235 billion – more than 30 % of Africa's total. This compares to EUR 125 billion for China and EUR 46 billion for the United States of America (USA). According to Eurostat, the EU's four biggest economies, France, Germany, Spain and Italy are the largest exporters of goods to Africa and also the most important importers. Most EU countries have trade surplus with Africa, except Sweden, Slovenia, Italy and Spain.

Over 65 % of goods imported to the EU from Africa were primary goods (raw materials, food and drinks, and energy). Raw materials account for 49 % of total imports, and among these imports we encounter some included in the EU critical raw material list (fluorspar, Helium, natural rubber, phosphate rock, tantalum, vanadium, and platinum). This list helps to enhance recycling activities and also achieve secure supply through diversification. From a geopolitical perspective, it also contributes to understand the strategic interest of the EU in African countries in view of the access to raw materials.

Table 2: African main trade partners (2018)

African exports to…
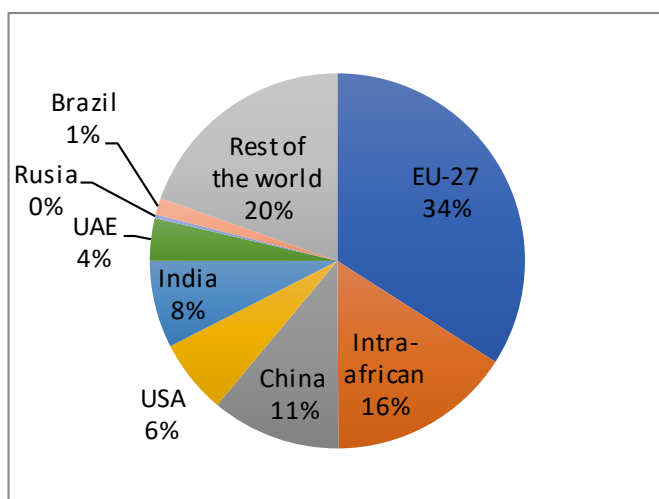
African imports from…
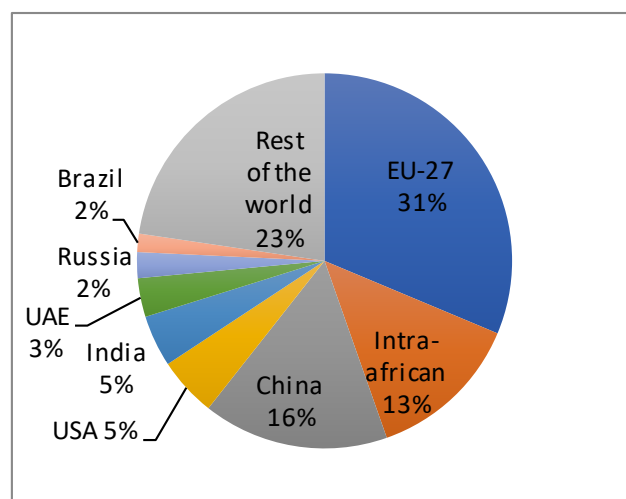
Source: own elaboration from UNCTAD

China is Africa's second largest partner both for exports and imports. Despite the current severe disruption in trade relations, according to most experts and following the last decade's trends (Table 3), China's

commercial presence in the continent will continue to grow. Accordingly, European companies will continue to face sharply increasing competition in African markets (Table 6). Conversely, while two-way US trade is waning (in some cases, due to US energy self-sufficiency), other emerging economies, such as India, show upward trends regarding both exports and imports. The upward trend in Russian exports to Africa is also significant, with the country currently accounting for 2 % of total African imports, albeit still a small share but having more than doubled over the last 10 years.

Table 3: African imports (goods) by origin. (Millions of USD)
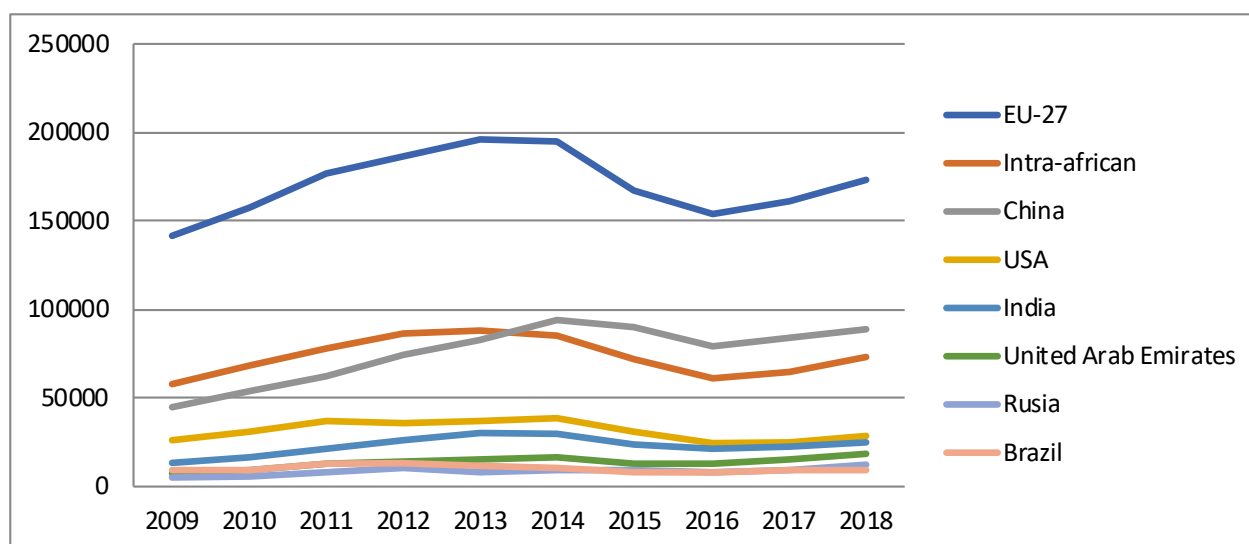

Source: own elaboration from UNCTAD

Currently, as many factories and businesses in the EU and China have closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for many African export products have declined. Prices of base metals such as copper, aluminium or manganese (basic in industrial processes) have weakened, mainly due to lower Chinese demand. Similarly, as European demand is falling, commodity supply chains and exports to the European market are being severely affected. Lower global demand and the reduction in oil prices will have an ambiguous effect in African countries. It will hit the budget of oil exporters hard (such as Nigeria and Angola, the main African producers), but will help other net importers' trade balances (such as Malawi and Ethiopia).

Regional trends

Intra-African trade, defined as the average of exports and imports, is still very low at around 14 % of the total. It is generally regarded as the lowest intra-regional trade in the world when compared with other areas, such as Europe, Latin America or Asia. Despite the proliferation of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) since African countries gained their independence, intra-regional trade remains sluggish. However, a closer look reveals more dynamic behaviour in regard to certain regional trends, for instance the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (20 % and 19 % respectively). As observed in the continental trend, most RECs' main trading is with Europe, except in SADC (equal trade with China and Europe) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The disruption in international supply chains that the coronavirus pandemic is causing (particularly with China, but also with the EU), has shown the importance of regional African producers to fill these gaps and the need to increase intra-African commercial relations.

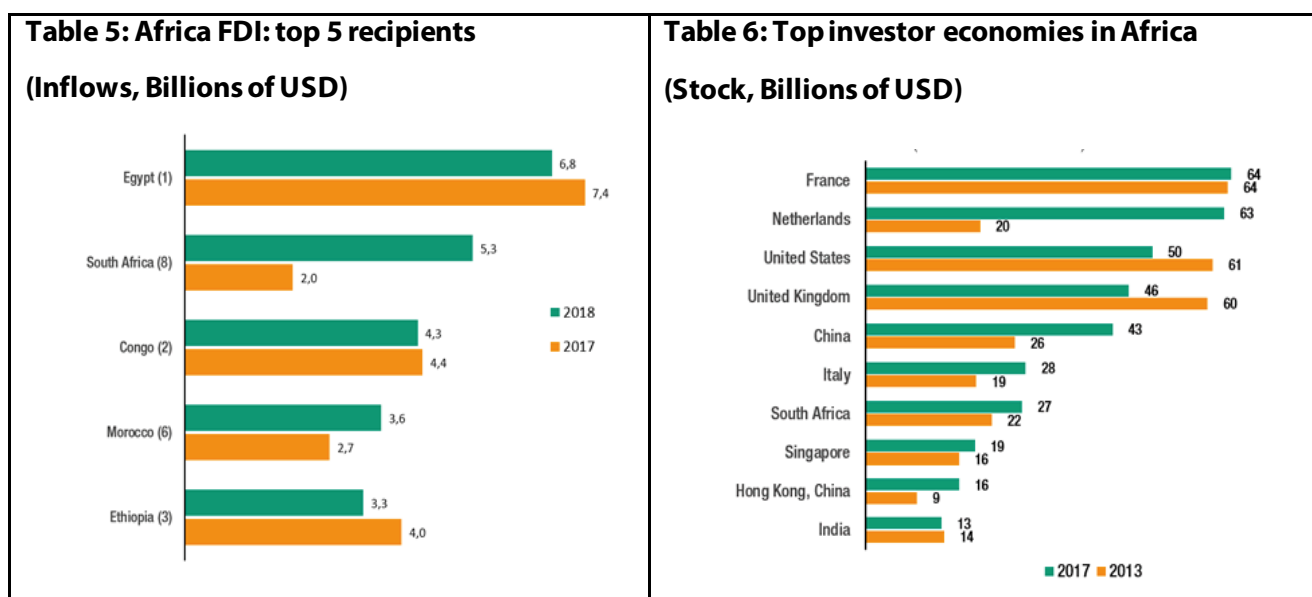**Table 4: Exports by destiny (%) in main African RECs (2010-2017)**

	Intra-regional	China	USA	European Union	Rest of Africa	Rest of the world
ECCAS (*Economic Community of Central African States***)**	2	**34**	15	20	4	25
SADC (*Southern African Development Community*)	19	**20**	8	**20**	3	30
AMU (*Arab Maghreb Union*)	3	5	8	**63**	2	19
ECOWAS (*Economic Community of West African States***)**	9	3	12	**29**	7	40
COMESA (*Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa***)**	9	12	4	**37**	8	30
EAC (*East African Community***)**	20	5	4	**19**	18	34

Source: UNECA (2019)

2.2   Trends in foreign direct investment to Africa

Until the spread of coronavirus worldwide, Africa had escaped the global decline in Foreign Direct investment (FDI) and flows to the continent were rising steadily. Though total investment remained small in global terms, they were significant in relation to Africa's economic size. The top five recipients of investments are: (1) Egypt, (2) South Africa, (3) Congo, (4) Morocco and (5) Ethiopia (UNCTAD, 2019). Though FDI in some large economies, such as Egypt and Nigeria, is contracting, this is being balanced by a surge in other African countries, with best examples being South Africa and Ethiopia.

In terms of top investor countries (in capital), France is still the largest, albeit with no stock increases since 2013. The Netherlands, the United States, The United Kingdom (UK) and China follow on the top investor list. Following Brexit, of significance was the recent (and first) UK-Africa Summit, held in January 2020, which is looking to strengthen trade and Investment for British companies after leaving the EU. South Africa is the main African country investing in other African economies, followed by Morocco, which is increasing its investment in the continent quite rapidly.

Table 5: Africa FDI: top 5 recipients

(Inflows, Billions of USD)

Table 6: Top investor economies in Africa

(Stock, Billions of USD)

Source: UNCTAD

Investments in Africa can also be viewed in terms of projects, jobs created and capital. Regarding the number of projects during 2014 to 2018, the USA and France are the largest investors, followed by the United Kingdom and China. For this period, China accounts for the largest share of jobs created and capital inflows to Africa. Although not noticeable in absolute figures, Portugal and Brazil are important investors in Portuguese-speaking countries, such as Angola or Mozambique. Looking at African countries investing in their own continent, South Africa is by far the largest and most geographically extended in a large variety of sectors. In more local terms, Egypt and Morocco are important investors in the North region, whilst Nigeria and Kenya are the main investors in their own regions (West and East Africa respectively).

Table 7: 10 largest investors (2014-2018)

Country	Projects	Jobs created	Capital USD m
USA	**463**	62 004	30 855
France	329	57 970	34 172
UK	286	40 949	17 768
China	259	**137 028**	**72 235**
South Africa	199	21 486	10 185
UAE	189	39 479	25 278
Germany	180	31 562	6 887
Switzerland	143	13 363	6 432
India	134	30 334	5 403
Spain	119	13 837	4 389

Source: EY (2019)

The extractive sector continues to be key in terms of inbound capital, but there is a shift towards other sectors, such as industry and services. Moreover, flows into Sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly targeting consumers instead of extractive industries. It is important to note that despite services receiving the least capital, specific services (e.g. financial/business and tourism) are creating more jobs than other sectors and

furthermore account for most new projects coming into Africa. Under the services heading, the consumer sector is prominent due to urbanisation trends (increasing need for clothing and feeding) and the rise in incomes. It has recently overtaken financial services, according to the EY Africa Attractiveness Report.

During 2020, the pandemic is likely to bring about a drop in investments globally. Hence, Africa will also experience reduced foreign investment. Chinese infrastructure projects, for instance, will face delays. Earlier, opportunities available on the African continent in terms of natural resources, urbanisation, demographic trends, outstanding economic growth, infrastructure and energy needs had been boosting international initiatives to facilitate business investment in African Markets. Among this groundswell of initiatives, probably the most well-known is the China Belt & Road Initiative and, since 2013, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the G20 Compact with Africa pushed by the German Government and the US initiative *Prosper Africa*. Russia also celebrated an inaugural Summit in 2019 whilst India had planned (but probably will postpone) a fourth India-Africa Summit for September 2020.

Whilst the coronavirus will probably cause disruptions to international investment in Africa, some countries like China or the EU, have deep-rooted interests in Africa, so it is certainly feasible that investment will recover and could then focus on new areas such as healthcare infrastructure. Europe could make a valuable contribution in developing local and regional value chains, green economy, supporting small and medium sized economies, knowledge transfer and development of human capital in the new post-COVID-19 context and needs.

3. EU trade and investment policy towards Africa

3.1 EU trade regimes towards Africa

EU trade policy towards Africa has traditionally divided the continent into two regions: the North African countries and Sub-Saharan Africa (Under the umbrella of the Africa, Caribe and Pacific (ACP) Group. With the North African countries, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, the EU has had bilateral free trade agreements (FTA) since the 1990s and 2000s. Under these FTAs, duty-free and quota-free access is granted for most goods (except for agricultural products exported by the African countries). Following the establishment of these agreements, whilst North African imports from the EU have increased over the years, North Africa's exports have not followed the same pattern and are still modest by comparison. Prior to 2011, the EU had been negotiating a trade agreement with Libya. However, according to the European Commission, the absence of political settlement within the country is still preventing trade discussions.

The EU started negotiations with Tunisia and Morocco to strive for more ambitious agreements, called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs), that entail abandoning low-grade free trade and opening up more integration with the European Market. These DCFTAs build on existing agreements and look to liberalise most good and services, so as to cover most trade-related areas, including technical barriers to trade and legislative approximation. They are also aimed at facilitating European investments in these countries.

The EU-Tunisia DCFTA negotiations moved quickly and substantial progress was being made in many areas until May 2019. Regrettably, since then negotiations have stalled, which according to the EC is due to civil society protests and a change of government. In contrast, whilst EU-Morocco DCFTA talks had been on hold since 2014, both parties committed to relaunch negotiations in 2019. Negotiations have yet to resume, but meanwhile the Agreement faces a critical controversy regarding the Western Sahara conflict. Although the EU has never formally recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, it nevertheless decided to include these territories in the DCFTA with Morocco. This impression of Morocco's political legitimacy in the area has provoked a legal challenge from the Polisario Front, which represents the indigenous Sahrawi population who are seeking to break free of Moroccan rule.

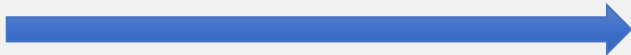**Table 8: Free Trade agreements between the EU and North African countries**

Country	In force since:
Tunisia	December 1997 (Negotiating a DCFTA since 2015)
Morocco	March 2000 (Negotiating a DCFTA since 2013)
Egypt	June 2004
Algeria	September 2005

Source: European Commission (2020)

The EU's trade regime with the remaining 49 Sub-Saharan African countries has evolved over time. Over the last 15 years, the EU has worked to transition from a non-reciprocal regime under Lomé Conventions (that gave free market access to most African exports into European markets) into a partnership model based on reciprocal market access under the umbrella of the Cotonou Agreement. Since the entry into force of the Cotonou Agreement in 2003, the European Commission has been negotiating **Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)** with African countries. The EPAs are FTAs with a pro-development orientation. In practice, as with other conventional FTAs, they give European companies preferential access to African markets. However, these EPAs remain controversial and as a result they have to date been applied to only 10 individual countries and one regional grouping (SADC). The **main concerns raised by civil society and some African Governments** regarding the EPAs are related to: (i) tariff reductions and loss of government revenue, (ii) negative impact of European companies competition in local producers, (iii) the threat to African regional integration efforts, and in general, (iv) the argument that EPAs are designed to benefit the EU side rather than pursue African interests.

For the remaining Sub-Saharan African countries (non-EPA signers), there are three different trade regimes. For those considered as Least Developed Countries, imports are duty-free and quota-free under the regime **Everything But Arms**. This highly preferential treatment does not require reciprocity and it also applies to other non-African LDCs. For the rest, the **Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)** is applied. This is a broad treatment granting preferential tariffs to imports from developing countries worldwide. The GSP is the less preferential treatment applied by the EU to African Countries, whilst still implying some tariff reductions. A summary of all these various trade regimes follows (Table 9):

Table 9: Summary of EU trade regimes with African countries

Trade regime ⇒	Everything but Arms (EBA)	Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)	Free trade Agreements (FTAs) with North Africa	Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+)	Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)
Beneficiary countries	31 Least Developed Countries (LDCs)	16 countries: Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mauritius, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Comoros, Kenya, Rwanda and the SADC group: Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Eswatini	4 North African countries: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia	1 vulnerable country, but not considered LDC: Cabo Verde	2 countries, not vulnerable, not LDCs: Nigeria and Congo-Brazaville
Market access to the EU	100 % duty and quota free (except arms)	100 % duty and quota free (except arms)	Duty and quota free (exceptions for agri-food and fisheries)	Duty and quota free for 66 % of products	Lower tariffs for 66 % of products
	More preferential				Less preferential

Source: own elaboration from EC (2017) and EC (2020)

In short, although to a different extent from country to country, these trade regimes make the European market the most open to African exporters. Nevertheless, at the same time, these plethora of trade regimes divide the continent and pose a challenge to the African ambitions to establish a continental free trade area. A one and only trade regime between the EU and the African Continents would be more coherent and push more effectively the African Agenda of economic integration and the ambition of establishing a pan African market.
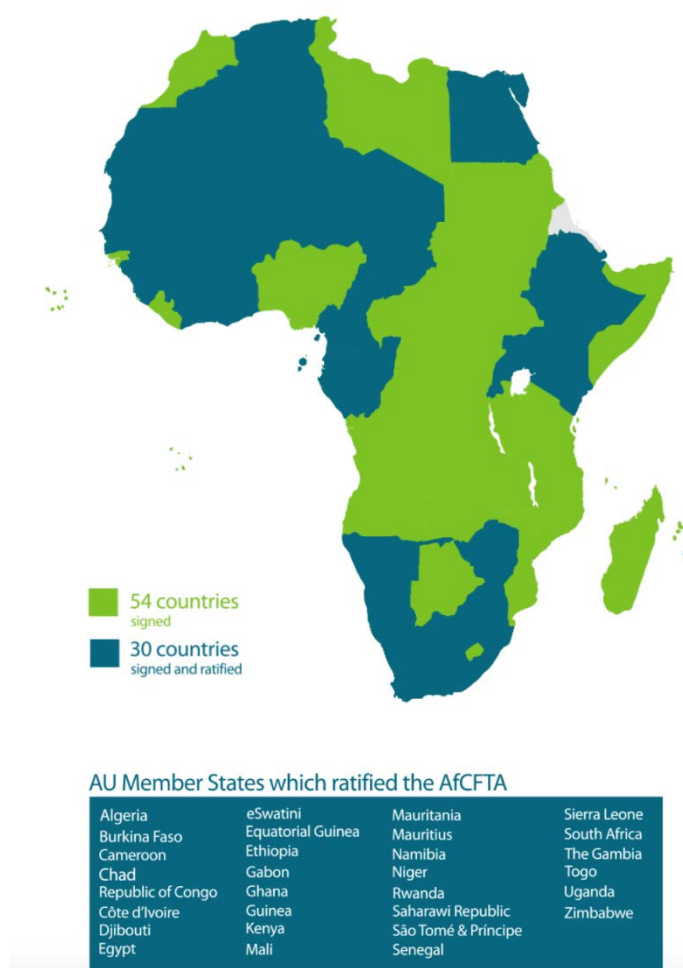
3.2   The EU and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

On 21 March 2018, African economic integration reached a milestone when the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement was signed off by 44 of the African Union's (AU) 55 members. The AfCFTA entered into force in May 2019 and has to date been signed by all African countries (except Eritrea) with 30 having reached the stage of full ratification. It has been agreed that Ghana will hold the AfCFTA's secretariat, which will develop the working programme and the annual budget. In 2020, Wamkele Mene, South Africa's Chief Negotiator in the AfCFTA negotiations and former diplomat at the WTO, was appointed Secretary-General.

AfCFTA is one of the African Union's flagship projects of Agenda 2063 and if fully implemented would put in place one of the largest free trade areas in the world. According to the AU, the AfCFTA aims to ´significantly accelerate growth of Intra-Africa trade and use trade more effectively as an engine of growth

and sustainable development by doubling intra-Africa trade, strengthening Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations' (African Union, 2018).

Map of signatories and state of ratification of the AfCFTA (March 2020)

54 countries
signed

30 countries
signed and ratified

AU Member States which ratified the AfCFTA

Algeria	eSwatini	Mauritania	Sierra Leone
Burkina Faso	Equatorial Guinea	Mauritius	South Africa
Cameroon	Ethiopia	Namibia	The Gambia
Chad	Gabon	Niger	Togo
Republic of Congo	Ghana	Rwanda	Uganda
Côte d'Ivoire	Guinea	Saharawi Republic	Zimbabwe
Djibouti	Kenya	São Tomé & Príncipe	
Egypt	Mali	Senegal	

Source: Africa-EU Partnership (www.africa-eu-partnership.org)

For those countries that have already ratified the Agreement, trading under the AfCFTA regime has been scheduled to begin on 1 July 2020, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, will probably be pushed to January 2021. Whenever this new trading regime does start, the AfCFTA will effectively remove 90 % of trade tariffs, thereby allowing free access to most goods and services across a significant number of countries throughout the continent. Over a 5 to 10-year period, there will be an additional 7 % of liberalisation for 'sensitive products' that have not previously been liberalised. A special group of countries, the G6 (Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe), have demanded a further 15 years' extension period, on the grounds that they face specific development challenges.

As with other international institutions, the EU has announced its formal support for the AfCFTA, which is summarised in two EC Communications:

1. On December 2018, former Commission President Juncker presented the Communication on a new Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, (the 'Africa-Europe Alliance') that confirms 'full' support to the AfCFTA, announcing EUR 50 million funding and technical assistance over a large number of areas (such as data collection and analysis, Technical Barriers to Trade, Intellectual Property Rights, investment and e-commerce, among others). Regarding EU trade regimes, this Communication explains that the long-term goal is to create a continent-to-continent free trade agreement. It adds that EPAs, FTAs with North African countries together with other trade

regimes between the EU and Africa countries should be 'building blocks to the benefit of the African Continental Free Trade Area' (EC, 2018).

2. The recent 2020 Communication Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa 'welcomes the African Continental Free Trade Agreement' and again promises technical and financial support as top priorities. It also reaffirms the former strategy, outlined in the Africa-Europe Alliance, of a comprehensive continent-to-continent free trade area. Furthermore, it reinforces the idea of EPAs and other EU trade regimes as tools for this goal.

The European Commission states that financial support for the AfCFTA goes through three channels: the Pan-African Programme (that supports negotiations, the establishing of an African Trade Observatory and strategic dialogue on investment climate reforms, among others), the EU Aid for Trade and the EU External Investment Plan. From these three instruments, only the Pan-African Programme is focused exclusively on the AFCFTA, as other channels relate to general trade and investment issues, rather than boosting intra-African trade and investment, as will be explained later.

The High Representative of the African Union with the EU, Carlos Lopes, has expressed his thoughts on the convenience of EPAs not progressing further and that achieving the AfCFTA will force a rethink on the external relations of Africa with the EU. It is clear that EPAs fragment Africa and according to Lopes trade preferences with third countries (in general) cannot build regional value chains and boost intra-African trade. This is evidence that despite the EC's statements about EPAs contributing to regional integration, there is no common understanding on how in practice they feed (positively or negatively) regional and continental integration through the AfCFTA.

3.3 EU initiatives for mobilising investments

There is as yet no single EU framework for investment in Africa. However, there are three main institutional initiatives for mobilising such investments: (a) *the Africa-Europe Alliance*, (b) *the external investment plan* and (c) *instruments related to the European Investment Bank*, such as the ACP investing facility and the External Lending mandate:

(a) *The Africa-Europe Alliance*: as already mentioned, this was announced by former President Jean-Claude Juncker on September 2018. It has committed EUR 4.2 billion for the period 2017-2020 in the expectation of leveraging new investments of EUR 41.5 billion (total expected investments in 2020: EUR 44 billion). The financial arm of this Alliance is the EU External Investment Plan.

(b) *The External Investment Plan (EIP)*: was established in 2017, being designed to attract private investments in Africa and the European neighbourhood (North Africa included in this group and other countries such as Georgia, Jordan and Moldova). Its original hope was to attack the 'root causes of migration' and stimulate investment in 'more difficult' countries. It replicates the idea of the 'Juncker Plan' for Europe, with the key issue to be recognised in understanding the EIP being the use of public money to diminish the risk of private investment. The EIP has three dimensions: (i) Financing guarantees through the European Fund for Sustainable Development, (ii) Technical assistance and (iii) Dialogue and communication with the private sector (in Africa, this has been done under the title 'Sustainable Business for Africa (SB4A) Platform' which is focused on improving the investment climate).

(c) *European Investment Bank-related instruments*: such as the ACP Investment Facility provided under the Cotonou Agreement since 2003, or the External Lending mandate to support investments in North Africa and South Africa (plus Asia and Latin America) and in pre-accession countries, which enables the European Investment Bank to increase its lending outside the EU, thereby reducing risk exposure for the EIB by shifting it to the EU.

4.   Conclusions and recommendations

- The new European Commission is placing EU-African relations to the fore. The Joint Communication towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa stresses the African Continent's strategic importance and the need to strengthen the EU partnership with (and not for) Africa. There are two possible interpretations of the EU's renewed interest in Africa. Either it is the consequence of China's increasing economic and political influence along with other international actors on the continent and the resulting loss of political and diplomatic ground. Alternatively, it could stem from the EU's ambition to become an influential international actor by means of a stronger and more articulated external policy. No matter which interpretation is correct, the continent has become a crucial arena for competition between states and companies as a source for global demand of natural resources, and for the EU in particular, a key market for critical raw materials supply.

  The Parliament shall consider that due to COVID-19 health crisis, the new Africa strategy proposals have fallen off the radar and become obsolete (Laporte,2020). Africa and Europe will be confronted with loss of jobs and economic recession and the list of priorities and actions will need to be revised. It is the time to build something new, and to review priorities based on the need to tackle the social impact of the crisis and the recovery of African economies, focusing on the EU making a useful contribution to this ambition.

- As the EU stresses repeatedly, Europe is still the main trading partner and largest source of foreign direct investment in Africa. According to their current performance in Africa, European companies still maintain an important level of competitiveness, but upward trends of activity from other international actors challenge the EU's economic leadership on the African continent. Competitiveness of an individual firm (usually related to its ability to survive in the market and make profits in the medium terms) is driven not only by internal factors, but also external factors such as the number of competitors and types of competition. In this sense, European companies are facing growing pressure from Chinese competition and as a consequence access to finance, among other issues, becomes a key instrument in maintaining European Companies presence in Africa.

  Despite all the Communication's emphasis on investment promotion, it does not include any new investment or financing commitments from the EU. Moreover, apart from COVID_19 related packages, prospects of additional funding for Africa in the next long-term Budget (2021-2027) are slim. In that sense, the Parliament shall address the gap between strategic consideration of the continent and the financial compromises needs to be fulfilled.

- The EU is the world's most open market for African exporters, but still holds as many as five different trade regimes with African countries. The Joint Communication makes specific promises in regard to developing the African Continental Free Trade Area and regional economic integration. It reinforces the message that EPAs and other trade regimes are tools for a future continent-to-continent free trade area, but EPAs remain controversial for African leaders and have created regional tensions.

  The future partnership needs to recognise diverging views on EPAs and find concrete solutions suitable for both parties. Desirably, and as soon as possible, a one and only trade regime, negotiated between the EU and the African Union, should be put in place. This will reassure that the EU is supporting in practice the pan African integration agenda that African leaders are pushing forward with the AfCFTA.

- Whilst it is true that this time on-going discussions with African actors have been announced, it is nevertheless important to remember that the EU has often been accused in the past of setting instruments and timings with limited involvement from African Actors. In this sense, some (but not all) of the EC's proposals are built on an agenda jointly agreed with the African Union in 2017.

In order to pursue an African understanding of common interests and legitimate partnership, effective and visible engagement in the next months with all African actors (including African Think Tanks) must be undertaken before the final EU-Strategy with Africa is adopted.

- Another challenge facing the future EU-Africa Strategy is how the proposed partnerships will be set up institutionally. While the role of the European Commission speaking on behalf of EU members is clear, there are many references to 'Africa', and very few regarding regional organisations and their roles (Byers).

  Taking into account the EU commitment to strengthen regional and continental integration, the African Union and RECs' respective roles need to be specific and enlarged in the future Strategy. For example, some voices have called for a Joint Continental Investment Platform, developed by the EU and the AU working together, to construct International financial institutions and jointly design investment programmes (Medinilla and Teevan, 2020).

- Regarding digital transformation, there is a common understanding between the EU and the African Union that it could be a game-changer and an opportunity to boost economic growth and job creation, and that it should be pushed among the top priorities of the agendas. Proposals included in the EC communication are in the line of the recommendations of the Digital Economy Task Force (formed of 20 African and EU decision makers and representatives on international organizations, private sector and civil society) for a New Africa-Europe Digital Economy Partnership.

  The European Parliament shall take into account that the digital agenda is a double-edged sword. It can also create more inequalities in poor populations left aside of technology access and become an instrument to control population by undemocratic leadership. The EU-Africa partnership needs to stress and help to develop legal frameworks to avoid these threats.

- The EU's endeavours to go climate-neutral by 2050, as part of the Green Deal Strategy, will have an impact on all EU trading partners in general and Africa in particular. Firstly, if fully advanced Europe will import less oil and gas from African countries. Secondly, European Green Deal related legislation could also directly affect African exports to the EU. As pointed out by Oxfam, some legal initiatives such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (that could burden African exports) should be carefully considered, to respect the 'do no harm' principle.

  In light of the above, the new African Strategy needs to address these concerns related to Green Deal legislation and impact assessments with African counterparts would be desirable for a stronger partnership.

- Finally, as the COVID-19 takes hold in Africa, it is becoming more certain that Africa will be hit not only by the spill-over effect on global economic growth, but also as a consequence of the temporal breakdown of trade and investment with the EU and China. It is feasible that more resources to tackle the pandemic's consequences will be demanded in the context of EU-Africa negotiations towards the new strategy. It could also be that EU support will be solicited as a result of emerging calls from African leaders, for example to alleviate debt burden, by means of global action and solidarity.

  It is becoming more urgent for EU and African relations post COVID-19 to be tailored to a new scenario and show tangible action along with partnership rhetoric.

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