AFRICA

EU-Africa relations are governed by the Cotonou Agreement and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, which both include political, economic and development dimensions. The EU is working actively to promote peace and security in Africa and engages with the African Union (AU) in various policy dialogues, including on democracy and human rights. Migration has emerged as a core element of Africa-EU relations. The European Development Fund remains the main channel for EU development cooperation in Africa.

LEGAL BASIS

— Article 217 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU);
— Partnership Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states and the European Community and its Member States (Cotonou Agreement);

THE COTONOU AGREEMENT

Relations between the EU and sub-Saharan Africa are currently governed by the Cotonou Agreement, which sets out the basis for relations between the EU and 78 countries in the ACP group. South Sudan is not a signatory to the agreement.

EU-ACP relations date back to the Lomé Conventions I-IV (1975-2000) laying down development cooperation and trade provisions, which allowed 99.5 % of products from ACP countries free access to the European market. Lomé was succeeded by the Cotonou Agreement, signed on 23 June 2000 and valid for 20 years. The goal of the Cotonou Agreement is to eradicate poverty by more fully integrating the ACP countries into the world economy. Cotonou employs the term ‘partnership’, highlighting mutual commitment and responsibility, and emphasises political dialogue, human rights, democracy and good governance. The Agreement is implemented by joint ACP-EU institutions, including a Council of Ministers, a Committee of Ambassadors and a Joint Parliamentary Assembly. There have been two revisions to the Cotonou Agreement, in 2005 and in 2010 respectively. The European Parliament gave its consent to the ratification of the 2010 revision in June 2013 but expressed ‘its strongest reservations about parts of the Agreement which do not reflect the position of the European Parliament and the values of the Union’. Parliament objected, in particular,
to the absence of an explicit clause on ‘non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation’.

As the Cotonou Agreement expires in 2020, discussions on the post-Cotonou framework are ongoing. In 2015, the European Commission initiated a process of reflection, which included a wide public consultation and an evaluation process. This reflection resulted in the publication in November 2016 of a joint communication, which sets out different policy options for the future. Parliament adopted a resolution on the future of ACP-EU relations beyond 2020 in October 2016. The Commission communication was followed in December 2017 by a proposal for the negotiating directives. This document was discussed in Parliament during the first half of 2018 and Parliament adopted a resolution expressing its position on 14 June 2018. This process culminated in the EU negotiating mandate, issued in June 2018, while the ACP countries issued their mandate in May. The dialogue started in October 2018 and negotiations will probably continue well into 2021. The outcome might consist in the setting up of a three-pillar structure, corresponding to the geographical areas of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, with an umbrella ACP super-structure, but it remains unclear how this will be institutionally implemented in practice, and what kind of parliamentary structure will accompany it.

THE JOINT AFRICA-EU STRATEGY (JAES)

The EU’s overarching policy vis-à-vis all 54 African states is the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). The JAES was adopted by European and African leaders at the second EU-Africa summit, in Lisbon in December 2007. The purpose of the strategy was to take the Africa-EU relationship to a new strategic level with a strengthened political partnership and enhanced cooperation at all levels. Its goals are:

— To move beyond development cooperation, opening Africa-EU relations to issues of joint political concern;
— To move beyond purely African matters, towards effectively addressing global challenges such as migration, climate change, peace and security;
— To support Africa’s aspirations to encourage trans-regional and continental responses to these important challenges;
— To work towards a people-centred partnership, ensuring better participation of African and European citizens.

The fifth EU-African Union (AU) summit took place in Côte d’Ivoire in November 2017, focusing on ‘Investing in Youth’. This is a key issue for both partners, as 60 % of the African population is aged under 25. In preparation for this event, in May 2017 the European Commission and the Vice President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) issued a joint communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership. Additionally, the European Parliament hosted a high-level conference to promote its vision of a new partnership ahead of the summit, gathering EU and African political leaders and policymakers to discuss peace and security, economic growth, migration and youth. At the summit, EU and African leaders adopted a joint declaration on the common
priorities for an EU-African partnership in four areas: (i) economic opportunities for youth; (ii) peace and security; (iii) mobility and migration; and (iv) cooperation and governance. They also condemned the inhuman treatment of migrants and refugees in Libya, adopting a joint statement on the issue.

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

On 9 March 2020, the European Commission and the VP/HR issued a joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council entitled ‘Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa’. It proposes enhanced cooperation focusing on five sectoral partnerships: green transition and energy access; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; and migration and mobility.

In July 2020, the European Parliament responded by presenting a draft own-initiative report on ‘A new EU-Africa Strategy – a partnership for sustainable and inclusive development’. While still to be adopted in plenary, the draft report reinforces and completes some parts of the strategy, such as sustainable and inclusive growth, while calling for a reinforced focus on others, such as human development, social inclusion, human rights, empowerment of women and young people, and resilient, mostly small-scale agriculture. On migration, the draft report considers that the success of the partnership will depend on significant improvements in mobility opportunities and calls for legal migration channels to be developed.

The sixth AU-EU Summit was scheduled to take place at the end of October 2020, but has been postponed to, possibly, spring 2021.

According to both the European Commission and the African Union Commission, the Summit should be dedicated to defining a new comprehensive EU strategy with Africa. This strategy will replace the existing Joint Africa-EU Strategy. The EU-Africa strategy currently being agreed by the European Commission, Council and Parliament will be put forward as the European proposal, while the African Union is currently in the process of issuing its own proposal. The two proposals should then be merged during the AU-EU Summit to form a Comprehensive Strategy that is equally owned and shared by both sides.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The EU remains Africa’s biggest donor. Development cooperation is channelled through different financial instruments. The most important is the European Development Fund (EDF), which is based on the Cotonou Agreement and is not part of the common EU budget (see separate fact sheet 5.3.1 on development). This financial structure might change as a result of the negotiations on the new EU multiannual financial framework 2021-2028 (see separate fact sheet 1.4.3 on this issue), which started in 2018 and should be concluded by late 2019 or early 2020. The 11th EDF has a budget of EUR 29.1 billion: EUR 24.3 billion for national and regional cooperation programmes, EUR 3.6 billion for intra-ACP cooperation, and EUR 1.1 billion for the ACP Investment Facility, run by the European Investment Bank.

The EDF covers all African countries that are parties to the Cotonou Agreement except South Africa, whose cooperation funds come from the EU’s Development Cooperation
Instrument (DCI), part of the common EU budget. The new DCI for 2014-2020 also allocates EUR 845 million to the Pan-African Programme (PANAF), which was created to fund the JAES and continental and transcontinental activities.

Other financial instruments relating to Africa include the European Neighbourhood Instrument for North Africa, the thematic programmes under the DCI (‘global public goods and challenges’ and ‘civil society and local authorities’) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

A number of African countries situated in the north of Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel and Lake Chad regions also benefit from the recently created EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. Since the fund was launched, the total amount of funding made available for the three regional windows has increased to almost EUR 3.6 billion.

TRADE RELATIONS

The principal instruments promoting trade between the EU and African regions are the World Trade Organization-compatible trade arrangements called ‘Economic Partnership Agreements’ (EPAs). However, the negotiation of these agreements, which started in 2002, proved more difficult than expected. As a result, for the moment only the EU-South Africa Development Community (SADC) EPA has been provisionally applied, since October 2016.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has standing interparliamentary delegations for relations with African countries and institutions. The principal body in which Parliament cooperates on such matters is the ACP–EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, which plays a fundamental role in strengthening relations between the EU and its ACP partners and meets twice a year. The last meeting took place in December 2019 in Kigali, Rwanda.

Parliament has also developed forms of parliamentary cooperation with the African Union through its Delegation for Relations with the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), established in 2009. The last EP-PAP interparliamentary meeting took place in May 2018 in Midrand, South Africa.

The next one is tentatively scheduled to take place in autumn 2020. If confirmed, it will replace the EP-PAP parliamentary summit that was postponed due to the postponement of the AU-EU intergovernmental summit. Parliamentary summits often accompany the intergovernmental ones, with parliamentary summits issuing a joint declaration directly to the heads of state or government at the beginning of each intergovernmental summit.

The probable topics of the tentative autumn 2020 interparliamentary meeting will be:

— Assessment of the AU-EU partnership and the compatibility of the new partnership proposals with the achievements of the existing Joint Africa-EU Strategy;
— Migration, displacement and asylum cooperation and youth mobility in Africa;
— Peace and security, in particular the roadmap towards the AU flagship initiative ‘Silencing the guns by 2020’;
Mechanism to achieve gender parity in all spheres of life through the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

The EU also has close bilateral parliamentary relations with South Africa, which were strengthened in 2007 by the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership - the EU's only bilateral strategic partnership with an African country. The last interparliamentary meeting took place in October-November 2018 in Cape Town (South Africa).

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