

AT A GLANCE

EU-Africa summit: A blueprint for action?

Author: Manuel MANRIQUE GIL

The fourth EU-Africa summit delivered a clear message on participants' willingness to advance a business-oriented partnership.

The meeting produced three documents:

- a political declaration,
- a roadmap for 2014-2017, and
- a declaration and action plan on migration and mobility.

The political declaration recognises the interdependency of both continents and their common interest in 'people, prosperity and peace'.

The recently concluded fourth [EU-Africa summit](#) (2-3 April 2014) has underscored the continued relevance of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). The summit avoided numerous potential pitfalls and delivered a clear message on common interests and a willingness to advance a business-oriented partnership. The huge gathering in Brussels included 90 delegations, most represented by heads of state or government (with notable exceptions being Britain and South Africa), and only Guinea Bissau, Libya and Zimbabwe not attending. The strong, high-profile attendance list was itself a promising sign given the thorny issues dividing the continents – economic partnership agreements (EPAs), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Robert Mugabe, amongst others. (While Mugabe's visa ban was lifted for the summit, Zimbabwe did not attend because his wife's ban remained in place.)

The two-day meeting produced three documents: a political declaration, a roadmap for 2014-2017 and a separate declaration on migration and mobility. While this was largely in line with the summit preparations (managed by the Commission and the EEAS for the EU and by the African Union Commission, or AUC), the results fell short of the most ambitious scenario envisioning *ad hoc* declarations on agriculture, the post-2015 development framework and climate change (a [ministerial statement](#) on this was issued on the summit's eve). The only separate declaration issued – [on migration and mobility](#) – focused on a topic that lay beyond the summit's radar six months ago, but that had climbed up the political agenda after various tragedies in the Mediterranean. The engagement of African and European affected countries led to a declaration and action plan to i) fight irregular migration; ii) combat human trafficking; iii) strengthen international protection to prevent further loss of life; iv) advance legal migration and mobility, and v) reinforce the migration and mobility nexus.

The principal document issued by the summit's leaders was a 10-page [declaration](#) renewing their commitment to the objectives of the JAES. The text takes stock of the recent, diverging trajectories of Europe and Africa, recognises the interdependency of both continents and reaffirms common interests and values in a partnership with 'people, prosperity and peace and security at its core'.

This declaration is complemented by a [roadmap 2014-2017](#) for speeding up the

The roadmap is politically oriented and focusses on five priority areas:

- i. peace and Security,
- ii. democracy, good governance and human rights
- iii. human development
- iv. sustainable and inclusive development and growth and continental integration, and
- v. global and emerging issues.

implementation of the JAES. This is the most innovative and symbolic product of the summit. Unlike preceding action plans (2008-10 and 2011-13), the roadmap is short and politically oriented. Critics may see the roadmap as too vague a blueprint for cooperation, but the summit's objective was to boost the JAES' implementation through renewed political engagement, not technical documents.

The roadmap focusses on five priority areas:

- i. **Peace and security.** A precondition to development and the area in which the greatest progress has been made. The roadmap envisions continued support to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Standby Force; more cooperation with sub-regional bodies; and a focus on maritime security. Highlighting the need to respond to crises, a [high-level meeting on the Central African Republic](#) was held alongside the summit and launched the EU military operation EUFOR RCA.
- ii. **Democracy, good governance and human rights.** Calling for more cooperation at the national, continental and UN levels, the roadmap refers to the on-going AU-EU human rights dialogue and emphasises cultural cooperation. Perhaps due to the summit's economic orientation and emphasis on common interests, this priority appears diluted and avoids controversial issues. By contrast, recent moves to criminalise lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Uganda and Nigeria were discussed in the parliamentary summit and included in its [declaration](#).
- iii. **Human development.** African countries pushed this issue to boost the continent's human capital. This priority area comprises existing cooperation on science, technology and innovation; a greater emphasis on higher education, including with student and academic mobility programmes, and migration (addressed through the *ad hoc* declaration).
- iv. **Sustainable and inclusive development and growth and continental integration:** This highlights the private sector, investment and trade, and notably does not refer to traditional development cooperation or official development aid. The roadmap supports expediting an African free trade area (FTA), for which EPAs serve as a building-blocks. There are important references to the African economic transformation agenda – transport and communication infrastructure, industrialisation and energy – and a clear emphasis on cooperation on agriculture and food security through concrete initiatives, as well as support for agribusiness.
- v. **Global and emerging issues.** Environmental concerns (land use, biodiversity) and climate change (including a call for a binding global agreement to enter into force by 2020) predominate. By contrast, references to the post-2015 development agenda are brief and vague.

The summit consolidated the EU's and Africa's desire to establish a firm economic-centred partnership with global aspirations. Whilst this can help transcend the donor-recipient model, it risks sidelining controversial issues to pursue economic interests. The roadmap adopted is politically engaging and may boost implementation of the JAES. However, the proof of the pudding will depend on EU-Africa high-level political dialogue in the coming years.