

CONCORD analysis of the Joint EEAS EC Communication "Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa"

On 9th March 2020 the [Joint Communication 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa'](#) was released by the European Commission and the European External Action Service. The Communication will be used as a basis for talks between the European Union and their African counterparts when defining the new EU comprehensive strategy with Africa, which will be approved at the next European Union-African Union summit. With this document, CONCORD offers a detailed analysis of what is presented in the Communication and proposes a critical and constructive reading of it, suggesting possible improvements and areas to be added or further developed in the upcoming strategy.

The process towards a new strategy and the role of Civil Society

- CONCORD would like to highlight that the Joint Communication should serve to launch the “**consultation process**” with all the parties and stakeholders on the upcoming EU-Africa strategy. Considering that the Joint Communication seems to be the basis for the new Africa strategy, and that this was drawn up in a unilateral manner, leaving both civil society (in Europe and in Africa) and African leaders themselves only a reactive role, it is paramount that the priorities and concrete actions of the future new strategy can be discussed in a genuinely open manner in the upcoming consultations with all actors.
- The Joint Communication does not explain how the consultation will take place in any detail nor the concrete steps that will lead to the adoption of a strategy at the EU-AU Summit of 2020. CONCORD recommends a wide consultation of all stakeholders and in particular an extensive consultation of European and African civil society ex ante, with due preparation and not a mere "tick the box" exercise. The consultation should be organised and implemented in a transparent, inclusive and accessible manner¹, so as to enable the participation of a diverse range of civil society representatives, including grassroots movements.

The proposed structure and themes of the future strategy

- We welcome all mentions of “**human development**” sectors such as health and education in the Joint Communication. However, these mentions should not be seen only as tools to enable a productive workforce: as the current Covid-19 pandemic is

¹ CONCORD recommends to begin with accessible online consultation and virtual meetings considering the current circumstances of the Covid pandemic.

showing, human development is crucial to reduce inequalities and build resilient societies. The future strategy must strongly acknowledge that. A future strategy must put people at its centre and prioritise human development in its own right and as an essential factor for sustainable development, so all people can reach their full potential within planetary boundaries. The strategy should acknowledge and help to deliver on the EU's commitment to spend 20% of its development assistance on human development and social inclusion.² Human development aspects must therefore be stressed throughout the entire document and not only in one specific section (e.g. Partners for Sustainable Growth and Jobs). Furthermore, the strategy must promote social protection and quality public services in nutrition, health (including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights³) and education at all levels.

- **Gender equality and the need to address all inequalities** should have been mainstreamed throughout the strategy. Although women and youth⁴ are mentioned as priority targets of the strategy, their role and needs are mainly limited to human development and growth, rather than cross-cutting the strategy. More broadly, the strategy should also take into account intersectional discrimination.
- A specific section on “**Climate-resilient agriculture and rural development**” must be included in the final strategy as it is currently missing from the Joint Communication. Agriculture is a major sector of sustainable development employing more than 50% of the workforce in Africa. It is clearly key to food and nutrition security. CONCORD therefore believes that it must be considered as a separate policy area with its own agenda, based on the report of the Task force rural Africa (TFRA) and of the outcome of the EU-AU agriculture ministerial meeting of June 2019⁵. Such a section would allow a thematic partnership approach based on a key sector contributing to major continental priorities including the reduction of poverty and hunger.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the agreement between the EU and Africa of a joint strategy

- COVID-19 will have important implications for the future of EU International Cooperation and Development, including for the narratives and future approaches for the EU's dialogue with and support to partner countries.
- The COVID-19 pandemic re-emphasises the urgent need, already stated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to promote massive **investments in public services**, in **universal coverage** and in **access to social protection**. This is crucial to

² [European Consensus on Development](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CONCORD-Smart-Programming-Paper-November-2018.pdf) (2017), para. 22. More information here: <https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CONCORD-Smart-Programming-Paper-November-2018.pdf>

³ As members of CONCORD, Caritas Europa and CIDSE support the collective work of the Confederation, but do not (fully) endorse the SRHR language used in this statement.

⁴ Youth UN Definitions see <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/international-cooperation/africa/eu-africa-partnership_en#documents

providing a safety net to ensure that no one is left behind. Regarding health in particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important it is for countries to build and maintain strong public health systems, which are able to adequately and effectively respond to health challenges. A strong and effective partnership between the EU and Africa should recognise the need to prioritise health systems strengthening, ensuring universal access to health services, as well as focusing on global health research and development.

- It is vital for the EU response mechanism and for the future strategy with Africa to build upon the lessons of the current and prior epidemics to support local efforts to prepare for, detect, and respond to inevitable future outbreaks of disease.
- While the COVID-19 virus can affect everyone, marginalised and excluded people will be disproportionately affected. Women, young people and persons with disabilities will be among the groups directly and indirectly affected by COVID-19 in Africa. The virus has exacerbated already existing inequalities for women and girls – in addition to the fact that they make up the large majority of health workers on the crisis' frontline. The COVID-19 pandemic is already causing a rise in sexual and gender-based violence, while limiting at the same time the access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services. The future partnership between the EU and Africa should have **gender equality** (including the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights) at its core by mainstreaming it throughout all policy areas. The COVID-19 crisis is exacerbating existing risks to children's health, development and protection, such as increased levels of domestic violence and children being unable to go to school, while creating new ones. The impact of COVID19 on women, youth and children should be assessed and adequately addressed. The EU should involve women and young people fully in its partnership with Africa, not just as economic actors, by listening to their voices and empowering them to be active citizens.
- The EU's response to COVID-19 and preparations for future pandemics in the EU-Africa Strategy should include **strengthening food and nutrition security**. Territorial markets that provide most of the food consumed in the developing world will be affected and small-scale farmers are already losing the channels to sell the food they produce. It is important for the EU to support local initiatives, notably led by local authorities and producers' cooperatives, to connect local consumers and producers, to stabilise food prices on local markets and provide an enabling and stable context for smallholder farmers and other small-scale food producers. Support for food reserves and cash or in-kind transfers, depending on the local situation, should be considered.
- Lastly, COVID-19 highlights the importance of supporting developing countries' efforts to increase **domestic resource mobilisation**, which would enable the delivery of quality and universal public basic services. Thus, the future Africa-EU partnership must give greater importance to **fighting illicit financial flows**, promoting **progressive tax systems**, **lowering remittances costs**, and reviewing tax treaties. While some of these are mentioned in the joint communication, the proposed new Africa strategy must

include concrete measures that would enable significant progress in increasing African countries' domestic resource mobilisation.

The following analysis of the thematic areas identified by the EU as priorities for the new comprehensive Africa-EU strategy, includes reference to the positive proposals in the Communication, while underlining what could be improved, modified or added. CONCORD also highlights key issues which are regrettably not mentioned in the document but that are extremely important for the definition of a common "Comprehensive strategy with Africa".

Introduction

Positive proposals:

- The EU demonstrates a strong interest in **strengthening the partnership** between the EU and Africa and in an enhanced coordination between the EU and its Member States about it.
- An important focus is put on **environmental** protection and climate change.
- The strategy acknowledges the importance of the role of **women** (gender equality, women's empowerment) and **young people** even though their role should be mainstreamed throughout the strategy.
- A renewed commitment to promote **universal values, human rights, democracy, the rule of law, gender equality**.

What to improve:

- The Joint Communication makes **no reference to the European Consensus on Development** (2017), even though that is the current action framework for EU Development Cooperation. The European Consensus on Development, together with the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Paris Agreement** should be the guiding frameworks for the new Africa strategy (this would imply designing the strategy based on the principles and priorities of these frameworks, rather than drafting the strategy and then matching its proposed actions with specific Sustainable Development Goals, for example).
- **Poverty** is mentioned in the introduction as a major challenge in Africa, but it is not mentioned a single time thereafter in the strategy or in any of the action points as a key objective to be tackled in the strategy.
- The Joint Communication does not mainstream **addressing inequalities**, as it should, and makes no reference to understanding or analysing inequalities, their consequences and possible solutions.

- CONCORD would expect such a strategy to have the issue of inequalities at its heart so as to **address the vital principle of ‘leaving no one behind’**. Instead of focusing on economic growth and private investments, the overall strategy should focus on achieving sustainable development, fighting poverty and addressing inequalities.
- While it is important to recognise that to benefit both continents, the partnership should be based on a clear understanding of mutual and respective interests and responsibilities, it is also important that the partnership be based on the respect of international human rights law, global guiding frameworks and commitments, and the clear recognition that economic *progress* should be inclusive, sustainable and framed within planetary boundaries.
- **Africa is presented as a homogenous bloc of countries**, with no reference being made to the multiple diverse challenges faced and the need to engage with local actors to address those challenges.
- In the text of the Communication, the EU - while mentioning the “ties” that bind the two continents - should also acknowledge the colonial past, stating that if we want a new partnership we must build on the lessons learned from the past.
- The Joint Communication fails to explain how the **political framework** that will be agreed upon at the upcoming Summit will relate to the legally binding **treaties** and the cooperation procedures that exist between the EU and Africa.
- When mentioning common interests, the EU should also recognise that the EU and AU have also **key conflicting interests**. For example:
 - *Industrialisation* - which is aspired to by African states but is not at the heart of the discussion;
 - *Trade* - how can Africa build local, domestic and regional markets and a continental market while EPAs and FTAs have already opened the door for European duty free and quota free imports. Furthermore, trade is not addressed as such in the Communication;
 - *Migration* - the way the EU perceives migration versus what Africa would like to gain from migration.
- In the list of “mutual interests”: it is the EU’s responsibility to look at its own policies to see how these support or hinder all these interests in line with the principle of **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD)**, and to be open to other interests expressed by African leaders. This list therefore has to be open to negotiation, including definitions of terms.

I. Partners for green transition and energy access

Positive proposals:

- The **focus on nature-based solutions** to mitigate the impact of climate change. These must go hand-in-hand with a significant decrease in CO2 emissions.
- The fact that **landscape and forest restoration** is key to fight climate change and must be further supported in the long-term for sustainable impact. Community engagement will be key to sustain efforts over several years and achieve the scale required to mitigate the effect of climate change.
- The recognition of the role that **agricultural food production**, processing and distribution play in providing direct employment particularly in rural areas and the need to **promote local production**.

What to improve:

- There is no recognition that currently **only 3% of global CO2 emissions come from Africa**, whereas the impacts and consequences of global emissions on Africa are significant, while their coping mechanisms are limited. African emissions will likely (need to) increase to allow for further industrial development, even if done sustainably, and will therefore need to be offset by changes elsewhere, for example in Europe. Both these aspects should be addressed in the strategy.
- There is no mention of **“local knowledge”**: local knowledge does not appear anywhere among the solutions, but should not be forgotten: agricultural techniques (such as permaculture) are proving very promising, for instance. Local populations should be supported to rediscover and use their knowledge.
- The **value-chains** that are mentioned in the Communication have to be local (in other words, value-adding has to happen in-country), even though this conflicts with the EU’s interest in exporting its manufactured products to Africa. While CONCORD welcomes the mention of *“fair value chains”*, the Communication lacks attention for **fair taxation** of EU companies in Africa. It also makes no commitments on access for African companies to the EU market, the entire focus is on improving the regulatory environment in Africa
- It is possible to kickstart ecosystem productivity through low-cost interventions like agroforestry, exclosures and Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration. Such approaches should be scaled up without further delay. There is overwhelming evidence that ecosystem productivity, livelihoods and development are intricately linked.
- **“A partnership on agriculture”** with Africa must focus on strengthening and supporting territorial markets, where most economic interactions around food take place. Smallholder farmers still produce most of the food consumed globally, they are the people who must ultimately benefit from this new partnership.
- The EU must do more than just *“protect and reduce pressure on forests”*. The new partnership must aim to restore degraded landscape and forests.

- The new strategy should promote the **implementation and the realisation** not only of **the Paris Agreement** but also of **the Convention on Biodiversity** and should also consider **local African conventions** and effective environmental policies.
- Gender equality is not mainstreamed in this section, hence ignoring the specific **impact climate change has on women and girls** and the role they could play in this area, in leading their communities towards more sustainable practices (such as in resource management) and participating in decision-making on climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Holistic climate and environment solutions that **prioritise ecosystem resilience and restoration**, agroecology and agroforestry, based on the rights, needs and aspirations of local groups and communities should be supported.
- The sustainable use and **integrated management of natural resources** should be promoted, including the EU Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreements with timber producing countries.
- A commitment to support African partner countries to implement their **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** and ambitious and just climate action should be included, including through supporting effective and inclusive stakeholder participation and governance of NDCs, National Adaptation Plans and National Agricultural Investment Plans.
- A new strategy should include the protection and promotion of the right of local communities to **access and control natural resources** such as land and water, with a special focus on women.
- Diversified, ecologically and socially sustainable and **nutritious food systems** should be supported, in particular those based on agroecology, and support small-scale food producers, many of whom are women in African countries. This may require the revision of trade agreements between the EU and African countries and regions in order to ensure that imports from Europe do not undermine rural development and agriculture.
- A new strategy should **tackle environmental crime and wildlife trafficking**.
- **Pollution** should be addressed with solutions for its reduction, taking into account the offsetting of the future increased industrialisation of the African continent, and put an end to the scandal of **waste exports** from European countries to partner countries that are not equipped for their treatment.
- Investments in and increase access to credit for community-led projects favouring renewable energy sources, including fostering access to safe, reliable, renewable and clean energy through decentralised solutions should be promoted, including for projects which enhance resilience and adaptive capacities.
- A new strategy should secure **balanced funding for mitigation and adaptation** climate actions.
- The development of jobs and entrepreneurship that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment in existing industries or new green sectors should be

promoted and supported, including by **mainstreaming green skills in formal and informal education and training**.

- Help to adapt and build more resilient public services should be provided, including in health, education and social protection which can contribute to creating individual and community resilience.

II. Partners for digital transformation

Positive proposals:

- In the text there are good references to strong measures to ensure security and to “appropriate legislation and operational capacity” to curb online threats to **democracy and human rights**.
- We welcome efforts to **promote quality learning and training opportunities to improve digital skills and literacy**, and to make the digital transformation inclusive: reference to specific policies “*to ensure full digital inclusion and digital equality for women and marginalised communities*” is made in the Joint Communication.

What to improve:

- We would like to see an inclusive approach mainstreamed throughout this section to ensure the digital transformation is shaped by and benefits all people. The new strategy must support **equal access, use and creation of digital technology**, with a view to bridging the digital gap including the digital gender gap. Mainstream digital literacy and skills in education and promote girls’ and young women’s participation in STEM and ICT subjects.
- The new strategy should foresee cooperation on legislation and frameworks that **protect consumers and producers in Africa** and that protect privacy and data ownership on the basis of the highest standards of existing legislation (e.g. GDPR, free flow of data and forthcoming EU copyright legislation).
- The new strategy must focus on a **rules definition** for a fair, innovative and inclusive digital economy in Africa and on public sector capacity to deliver digital services (eID, eHealth, eGovernment etc).
- It is also key that the digitalisation agenda in Africa **supports local MSMEs and start-ups** to deliver social innovation to real/identified development needs.
- The African Union and its members must maintain the autonomy and liberty to develop their own digital regulations and digital industry in order to prevent a “*digital scramble for Africa*” or for Africa’s data to be exported, owned and stored by large foreign digital companies. Further, these companies must not be allowed to control Africa’s digital market and e-commerce without substantial local presence, employment creation and tax contributions. Africa should not be put under pressure to join a plurilateral e-commerce agreement (among certain WTO members) that is

not in its interest. The EU should facilitate, through its development cooperation policies and projects, the African states' autonomy and liberty to develop their own digital regulations and digital industry.

III. Partners for sustainable growth and jobs

Positive proposals:

- The **eradication of child labour** as a specific objective. Special attention should be paid to the worst forms of child labour, including sexual exploitation and children being involved in armed conflicts.
- The focus on **sustainable investments** and on the **creation of decent jobs** and the recognition of the importance of **social dialogue** with public authorities, workers and employers.
- The focus given to girls and women in relation to access to inclusive and quality education and training at all levels, as well as financial services. CONCORD also welcomes the recognition that tackling discriminatory regulations and practices is a requirement for girls' and women's empowerment. It should be stressed that supporting girls' and women's agency and tackling discriminatory gender norms are crucial to unlocking their full potential. These actions should therefore not only be supported for the benefit of economic progress.
- The reference to the EU's and Africa's common interest in promoting investments in basic health care and in developing infrastructure and capacity to cope with outbreaks of diseases (with a particular attention to the Covid-19 and post Covid-19 pandemic emergency)⁶.

What to improve:

- The **fundamental function of the economy** as a social institution to serve people and the planet **has been forgotten** in the quest for efficiency and to maximise returns. The development of a new strategy offers a valuable opportunity to reverse this trend and to put the social and environmental dimension at the heart of the Africa-EU partnership.
- **Youth and Human Development:** Africa is home to the largest youth generation in history. This can represent an opportunity to contribute to sustainable progress. But reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend cannot happen without strong investments in human development through quality public services and the respect for human rights. The renewed Africa-EU partnership should ensure strengthened public services in order to fulfil the rights of everyone to nutritious food, education, access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. In particular,

⁶ For example the EDCTP *-European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership-* instrument to strengthen research capacities in sub-saharan Africa from Horizon 2020. See EU "Communication on the Global EU response to COVID-19" p11: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/joint-comm-2020-eu-global-response_en.pdf

young people need accessible, affordable and adequate youth-friendly services, to allow them to reach their full potential and bring a positive contribution to society and the economy. A specific focus on adolescent girls will be particularly important, as they often have less access to these services or they face discriminatory social and gendered norms.

- **Basic services and social protection:** the new strategy should ensure the public delivery of essential services and social protection measures. Private investment cannot be a substitute for public investment in services such as health, education, environmental protection and water supply or sanitation or in the provision of universal social protection.
- All basic services, as well as social protection systems, must be gender-sensitive. They can have different impacts on women and men, girls and boys, and it is extremely important that this is addressed through gender mainstreaming as well as gender-targeted actions.
- **Budget support dialogues** should not undermine African policy space and domestic democratic processes.
- **On trade:**
 - the EU must recognise that its trade agreements with African countries and regions can stand in the way of enhancing African economic integration and intra-African trade. The EU must not pursue the broadening and deepening of its FTAs and EPAs with Africa without coordination with the African regional and continental plans. In supporting the African regional and continental trade ambitions, the EU should not lose sight of the social and environmental dimensions and should therefore direct more financial means (including access to credit) to prepare resource poor actors for the increase in competition that Africa's trade liberalisation will inevitably bring.
 - EU-Africa cooperation on trade and investment must aim to increase the industrialisation and diversification of African economies and enable the regulatory space of African countries to develop their economic policies and protect and support their small-scale entrepreneurs and farmers.
- **On financing:** The Joint Communication shows overly strong confidence in 'innovative finance mechanisms' via the European Sustainable Development Fund (EFSD) and in coordination with development finance institutions. However, no evaluation of the current EFSD has occurred to demonstrate its effectiveness, and the evaluation of previous blending by the EU showed that its poverty eradication potential was in fact generally negative⁷.
- **On the role of the private sector, private investments and public-private partnerships:**

⁷ European Commission 2016. Evaluation of Blending – Final Report. Volume I –Main Report. Prepared by Analysis for Economic Decisions (ADE). December 2016. https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/evaluation-blending-volume1_en.pdf

- EU-Africa cooperation on investment and private sector development should give preference to investors who **respect planetary boundaries and promote sustainable development**. Respecting the **Paris Agreement** means an explicit ban on supporting fossil fuel projects and those incompatible with climate plans, and preference should be given to those which build resilience, and integrate adaptation considerations. For example, links with local companies must be systematically established in order to strengthen the local financial, industrial and agricultural fabric.
- The approach to investments is insufficiently nuanced: not all will benefit societies at large and many even risk increasing inequalities.
- In the new strategy, any engagement with the private sector must ensure the respect of the Busan development effectiveness principles (including ownership, alignment, harmonisation and mutual accountability), the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenureship and the Kampala Principles on Effective Private Sector Engagement in Development Cooperation.
- Investments in enterprises with **inclusive business models**, such as social solidarity enterprises, and in local MSMEs should be prioritised to create a more level playing field and fairer competition. The focus on creating an enabling business environment must prioritise these companies' needs and their protection from unfair free trade competition.
- There is an overemphasis on private investments and public-private partnerships without qualifying them - that is, without clarifying how these investments should be made and whom they should target.
- When supporting public-private partnerships and private investments with ODA resources, the EU and its African partners must support investments and activities that provide **development additionality** and work for local economic actors. For example, mergers and acquisitions that do not create any value or do not transfer any knowledge, or rent-seeking investments, should be avoided. All actors involved should apply **due diligence**, including respecting the principle of free and prior informed consent and putting in place grievance and remedy mechanisms.
- There is little consideration given to the important role of the state, especially in ensuring equitable sustainable development. In the African continent there is often inadequate regulation in place to govern private entities' operations, and little to no evidence that they cause no harm, bring development additionality, or contribute to fighting inequalities - on the contrary.
- The future strategy must ensure that **decent work standards and principles** are adhered to through labour rights enforcement and inspection, inclusive social dialogue and strengthening social protection systems. Through their cooperation and policy dialogue, the EU and African partners must promote and support the freedom of association, collective bargaining and the participation of a diverse and wide civil society— including farmers, women's and youth organisations – in economic policy-making and reforms.

- The ratification and implementation of the recently adopted ILO Convention on gender-based violence at work (ILO 190) is key to create an enabling environment for women and girls. This not only implies the adoption and implementation of enabling laws and policies and the abolishment of those that discriminate or are gender-blind, but it also implies addressing negative or harmful social norms, which will have a real gender-transformative impact.
- A partnership between the EU and Africa must ensure that European companies pay their fair share of taxes where they operate and promote **progressive tax systems**.
- The EU should stop expanding the Investor State Dispute Settlement system in Africa (for instance by promoting the Energy Charter Treaty) and instead replace it by state-to-state dispute settlement while supporting the strengthening of the domestic judicial system and connected reforms.

IV. Partners for peace, security, governance and resilience

Positive proposals:

- The recognition of the interlinkages between resilience, security, peace and governance as well as the underlining of the need to adopt an integrated approach at all levels to fully achieve resilience.
- The acknowledgement that development can only be sustainable when rooted in full respect of **human rights** without discrimination on any ground, including on ground of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The recognition that **democracy and the rule of law** are prerequisites to sustainable development and security in the long term.
- The focus on supporting **women's and youth's** economic empowerment and participation in public life, the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.
- The fact that "special attention will also be paid to the implementation of the **Women, Peace and Security Agenda** and of the **Youth, Peace and Security Agenda**."
- The mention that the protection of **children's rights** "merits particular attention" and the specific mention of children as stakeholders to be actively involved in the decision-making processes of civic and political life.

What to improve:

- **Security** is increasingly added in the "triple nexus". This approach overlooks the role of inclusive governance and local level peacebuilding. Furthermore, there is no

mention of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the entire document nor of the role of the nexus approach in non-conflict contexts.

- **Resilience** is not adequately defined in the document. The Joint Communication unfortunately focuses primarily on *state resilience* rather than on *community resilience*.
- While welcoming the mention of concrete initiatives to reinforce **civil society organisations**, CONCORD recommends that the strategy recognise their multiple roles and contributions and therefore the necessity to involve them at all levels of political and policy dialogue, including when implementation plans are prepared, monitored and evaluated. The strategy should also aim to foster an **enabling environment for civil society** and to support the ability of civil society organisations to seek, receive and use financial resources.
- The strategy should facilitate regular interactions between civil society and relevant authorities, including the EU Delegations, through institutionalised spaces of regular dialogue and ad-hoc mechanisms of consultation.
- In order to recognise civil society organisations as independent actors or stakeholders in their own right, the strategy should refer to the existing UN definition of civil society.
- We call on the EU to support **the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250⁸** at EU level and across all Member States.
- A meaningful, safe and inclusive **child participation** in all matters affecting their lives should be ensured in the new strategy. Special efforts should be made to reach the most marginalised children, and to take into account the specific barriers girls face. Concrete steps should be included towards the **eradication of violence against children**, including concrete actions to end harmful practices and child, early and forced marriage and support the ratification by parties to all the Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- While welcoming the commitment to continue support to credible, inclusive and transparent electoral processes, the EU should **focus on strengthening democracy** in the long-term through a variety of actors, including civil society, local authorities, independent media, political parties and inter-party dialogue, and parliamentary strengthening.
- The new strategy should refer to human rights conventions and fundamental freedoms as essential elements of the EU's partnership with Africa, explicitly mentioning the **freedoms of expression, opinion, association and peaceful assembly**.
- **Strong mechanisms for ongoing and meaningful civil society participation** shall be foreseen.
- An **online civil society platform** to stimulate, coordinate and facilitate civil society participation should be created. The EU should share relevant information on the

⁸ The United Nations Security Council adopted unanimously, on 9 December 2015, [a resolution](#) on Youth, Peace and Security which recognizes that “*young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security*”.

implementation of the strategy in a timely, accessible and regular manner to allow civil society to organise itself for relevant meetings and consultations.

- The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)⁹ and the African Governance Architecture (AGA)¹⁰ should be reinforced and the new strategy should **protect and uphold the role of civil society organisations** in building peace, resilience and in promoting good governance.
- The importance of focusing on human security should be stressed, addressing the root causes of conflict and ensuring that any EU engagement is conflict-sensitive (and therefore gender-sensitive) and based on the needs and initiatives of local populations, in particular civil society initiatives for peace.
- The roots of fragility at all levels by **supporting initiatives aimed at building societal, health and economic resilience** (e.g. the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention) should be taken into account and addressed effectively.

V. Partners on migration and mobility

Positive proposals:

- The recognition of **benefits of migration** for all countries involved.
- The recognition of the importance of African regional mobility as a positive factor of development.
- The recognition of the disproportionately **large contributions of African states to hosting refugees and displaced populations**.
- The recognition of the importance of having a ***“balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach to migration and mobility, guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility and based on the respect for human rights and international law.”***
- The **commitment to support regular channels of migration** and more specifically labour migration.
- The commitment to **facilitate remittance flows**.

What to improve:

- This section of the Joint Communication could be strengthened if developed in the new strategy as **a set of common actions with African partners**.
- **On the understanding of migration:**
 - The new strategy's view on migration should be based on **international human rights law** as well as on the holistic approach to migration articulated in the SDGs

⁹ The establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) coincided with the transition from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the AU in 2000. The APSA was created with the objective of managing and preventing (violent) conflicts in Africa more effectively.

¹⁰ <http://aga-platform.org/>

- and the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** that was widely signed. As the strategy calls for a partnership between countries of origin, transit and destination, the diversity of needs and priorities should be taken into account, including those of partner countries.
- The Communication lacks **a positive and evidence-based narrative on migration and a focus on the migration-development nexus**. The text of the new strategy should explicitly acknowledge that migrants and diaspora are an important driving force in the development of the countries of *origin* and *destination*.
 - The new strategy should include **a clear and strong commitment to PCSD**. In particular, the EU and its Member States should specify their commitment to refrain from engaging in policies and practices that exacerbate forced displacement and that compromise sustainable development in Africa (e.g. fiscal policy, arms trade, etc.).
- On **legal migration**:
- The new strategy should foresee **the creation of regular pathways** for persons *from all parts of society*. The EU and African countries should expand safe and regular migration channels between Europe and Africa as well as regular mobility on the African continent, so as to reduce human rights violations and migrants' deaths on dangerous migratory paths and to maximise the benefits of migration. The new strategy should include concrete and specific actions for the **protection of people on the move** and their human rights.
 - 'Sustainable **return and reintegration**' will only succeed if coupled with robust and long-term policies supporting returnees and tackling structural issues in countries of origin (sustainable and fair economic structures, good governance and rule of law, respect of human rights, etc.). Return arrangements should be organised on the basis of safe, voluntary and dignified return.
 - The EU should ensure that its external migration policies - which have the objective of preventing people from reaching Europe - do not harm those existing frameworks and coping mechanisms in the process.
- On the role **diaspora and civil society**:
- The new strategy should include a concrete action on empowering migrant and diaspora groups to contribute to the *implementation and monitoring* of the new strategy.
 - The Joint Communication reiterates **existing policy action plans, dialogues and funding mechanisms** (Joint Valletta Action Plan, Rabat/Khartoum processes, EUTF, etc.) - however, all those policy tools reflect the dominance of EU priorities, the asymmetric balance of power between EU and African institutional actors, and an opaque decision-making process with little involvement of EU or African civil society. It is unclear how the new 'Continent-to-Continent' framework would be an improvement.

VI. Conclusion: working together to implement the partnership

Positive proposals:

- CONCORD welcomes the renewed commitment of the EU to cooperate at UN level to foster and implement common agendas and pivotal agreements. The mobilisation of resources for the partnership is highlighted as a key element at EU level.
- The strategy recognises the important contribution of diaspora to ensure a future for EU-Africa collaboration beyond institutional relations, as well as the necessity to promote an ongoing dialogue with diverse actors of civil society in order to foster resilience and ensure accountability.

What to improve:

- The new strategy should aim to **strengthen multilateral governance** for a fairer and more sustainable management of **global public goods** through policy dialogue, stakeholder engagement and multilateral cooperation. It should support Africa's climate adaptation and mitigation strategies by addressing vulnerable sectors such as food and nutrition security, water, health, ecosystems restoration, energy and sanitation.
- The “policy first” principle mentioned on page 17 of the Joint Communication should be replaced with the terms and **correct understanding of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD)**. It is essential that the EU applies these principles across its policies to ensure that they support, and do not undermine, partner countries' sustainable development.
- Inequality, poverty and civil society are mentioned only a few times in the Joint Communication, while economic growth, investment, business and the private sector are mentioned multiple times. The final strategy should shift the focus towards a people-centered approach.
- The EU should be a meaningful and ethical partner for African countries, particularly by supporting efforts to make the global governance system more inclusive of developing countries.
- Greater clarity should be provided regarding the **means of implementation** (also financial) which will be needed to implement an effective and lasting strategy.
- **Clear responsibilities** should be identified for all stakeholders involved – especially considering that many priorities listed in the Joint Communication are not exclusively related to development cooperation (e.g. financial support to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement).

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[**Towards a new EU-Africa Strategy - CONCORD 10 points for building a real partnership / March 2020** [Link](#)]

