



# How to deliver on the EU-Africa Partnership's ambitions?<sup>1</sup>

## Adapting the institutional framework for EU-Africa relations

Since the adoption of the outline of the joint EU-Africa Strategy<sup>2</sup> and in the run up to the EU-Africa Summit to be held in Lisbon in December 2007, discussions have grown more intense to develop the outline in a proper Strategy. However if both sides are to translate the ambitions of the Strategy into practice, appropriate steps will need to be taken in time in order to realise these ambitions. Let us consider what changes in the institutional framework for EU-Africa relations would have to be made in order to deliver on the Strategy's ambitions.

### **What are the ambitions of the joint EU-Africa Strategy?**

The EU-Africa Strategy's objective<sup>3</sup> is to establish an enhanced partnership between the EU and Africa with a stronger political dimension, which would constitute a turning point in the relations between the two continents. In order to achieve this ambition, the institutional framework of the EU-Africa partnership should be adapted to allow for: (1) a strengthened political dialogue, adapted to the ambitions of the new Strategy as well as to its reinforced political dimension and (2) the effective implementation and follow-up of the engagements taken in the Strategy at all levels.

The following principles, listed in the outline of the joint EU-Africa Strategy approved at the EU-Africa Ministerial Troika on 15 May 2007, should guide the establishment of a reinforced EU-Africa institutional framework: an inclusive dialogue, involving all institutional and non-institutional actors (EU-AU institutions, regions, Member States, civil society), joint accountability and the adaptation of the current dialogue modalities to the Partnership's goals

### **A central role in the new institutional architecture for the African Union**

The African Union, as a central actor in this partnership, is not yet integrated in all the frameworks of institutional dialogue governing EU-Africa relations. Indeed EU-Africa relations are organised around three existing agreements : the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, for EU-ACP relations that guide the relationship between the EU and sub-Saharan Africa; the

---

<sup>1</sup> The editorial is written by Marie-Laure de Bergh, Program Officer at ECDPM. The opinions expressed do not represent any official view of the African Union.

<sup>2</sup> The outline of the future joint EU-Africa Strategy was adopted on 15 May 2007 by the joint EU-African Ministerial Troika. [http://ec.europa.eu/development/ICenter/Pdf/2007/EU-Africa\\_Strategy\\_outlinefinal070515\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/ICenter/Pdf/2007/EU-Africa_Strategy_outlinefinal070515_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Four objectives are mentioned in the outline : (1) To reinforce and elevate the EU-Africa political partnership to address issues of common concern [...]; (2) To continue to promote peace, security, sustainable development, human rights and regional and continental integration in Africa [...]; (3) To jointly promote and sustain a system of effective multilateralism and strong and legitimate multilateral institutions, and the reform of the United Nations (UN) system, and to address global challenges and common concerns [...]; (4) To facilitate and promote a broad-based and wide-ranging people-centred partnership [...].



European Neighbourhood policy that include the relations between the EU and Northern Africa; and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and South Africa. Separate financial instruments correspond to these agreements and policy frameworks, which themselves answer to different logics in terms of the European Union policy towards each of these regions.

If the ambition of the joint EU-Africa Strategy is to enter into a continent to continent relationship and start “treating Africa as one” as well as to recognise the role of the African Union as the central interlocutor on the African side for this new relationship, this will need to be translated into institutional terms. This has been initiated with the revision of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in 2005, which foresaw that the African Union could benefit from EDF funding. In order to be consistent with the ambitions of the Strategy, other reforms should be undertaken. In the short term, a multi-annual pan-African envelope should be established in order to support the African Union in a strategic manner as is already done for the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs); the establishment of such an envelope that should be co-funded by the EDF and the ENPI could be one of the concrete deliverables of the EU-Africa Summit. In the more medium term, if the African Union is considered as a central actor in the political dialogue between the two continents then it should be integrated in the framework for dialogue between the EU and African countries under the frameworks of both the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and the European Neighbourhood policy. This is true for all matters of dialogue including the trade dimension of the partnership: if the EU is to support the African continental integration process, then the coherence and synergies among the various trade agreements between the EU and Africa should be discussed among all relevant actors, the African Union bringing the continental vision.

### **A more coherent framework of dialogue**

Currently, the institutional framework for EU-Africa relations does not entirely correspond to the ambitions of the Strategy. Indeed, on top of the numerous bilateral relations between EU and AU Member States and institutions, a joint EU-AU Ministerial Troika meets twice a year to discuss political issues. In parallel with these Troika Ministerial meetings the EC and AUC staff also meet twice a year at a technical level and once a year at the political level with a college to college meeting. The EC also has, in the framework of its cooperation with the various regions and countries in Africa, regular occasions to discuss with them and is in this context, the only institutional actor with an overall vision of its relationship with Africa.

As it has been often underlined in the framework of the preparation of the Summit, there has so far never been regular EU-Africa Summit of Heads of States and Governments, the first one took place in Cairo in 2000 and the second one, intended for 2003 in Lisbon, was cancelled. This is not the case for the EU relationship with other regions of the world, neither is it adequate for a strengthened partnership. A proposal to reinforce this aspect of the EU-Africa relationship, which does not only address the issue of the frequency of the Summit, was made by the EC and the Council Secretariat in their joint paper of 27 September 2007<sup>4</sup>.

More importantly, the question raised by the present institutional framework is: how to make sure that the Africa-EU partnership is not just on both sides of the Mediterranean a “Commission” affair both at a political and technical level? Indeed on the European side, the EU

<sup>4</sup> EC-Council Secretariat joint paper: ‘Beyond Lisbon - Making the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership work’. 27 September 2007. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007\\_0357en01\\_02.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0357en01_02.pdf)



Strategy for Africa adopted in 2005 seems to have been mainly carried by the European Community in terms of concrete commitments. On the African side, the institutional set up is even more complex given the existence of RECs as well as Member States. While the former have been poorly associated so far in the discussions, they are expected to play a key role in the implementation of the joint Strategy. The involvement of all these actors in terms of concrete commitments will be essential for the successful implementation of the Strategy as well as the insertion of the European and African Member States bilateral policies into this broader strategic framework. While the scheme adopted at the Cairo Summit (with chefs de file nominated for eight priorities adopted) should not necessarily be repeated, the renewed institutional framework should ensure this connection among the different levels in a creative manner.

### **An inclusive monitoring process**

The effective implementation of the Strategy will depend heavily on the quality of its monitoring. According to the various actors, the monitoring of the Cairo action plan has not been particularly successful, partly because of the cancellation of second EU-Africa Summit in 2003 and a lack of appropriate tools. So far, the EC was responsible for the monitoring of the EU's own Strategy for Africa and the debate one year after its adoption on the occasion of the presentation of the first report to the EU Member States remained limited. On that basis, the following principles should apply to such a mechanism: joint accountability, multi-actor dimension, political discussion on the monitoring, integration of the different levels of dialogue and implementation. Several issues will need creative answers: how to make sure that the monitoring is discussed on the basis of appropriate monitoring tools? Are there lessons to be learnt from monitoring processes of other strategic commitments, for instance the Paris Declaration? How to involve other actors in the monitoring process than just the two Commissions? Finally, how to discuss the results of the monitoring of the implementation?

Some first answers can certainly be provided: the stronger association not only of Member States but also of the European and Pan-African Parliaments as well as national Parliaments if possible would for instance allow for a broader and more political debate. Evidence based sources of information could be diversified: from institutional actors but also from non-institutional actors (especially at the national and local level) and from independent evaluations at various levels of the implementation of the joint Strategy.

If the monitoring is to be inclusive and political, particular attention should be paid to the integration of civil society in the monitoring process as they often play a useful "watchdog" role in monitoring the various commitments made in Europe and Africa. Dialogue between European and African civil societies already exist of course, but it is not / only partially structured around the calendar and the agenda of the institutional dialogue between EU and Africa. In order to include non-institutional actors as fully participating stakeholders in this new partnership, dialogue fora could for instance be foreseen in connection with the calendar of the institutional dialogue (Summit, ministerial meetings), but building on the existing initiatives and on a co-decided agenda. Indeed similar initiatives have failed more than once because they were perceived as attempts to "impose" an agenda and were not based on existing structures and initiatives. If such fora are launched, they should be conceived jointly by various representatives of European and African civil society willing to engage in such a process with the support of the EU and the AU.



## **Conclusion**

In sum, at this stage in the debate leading up to the Summit, it is already crucial to think ahead and consider proactively the follow-up. Key points such as the place of the African Union in the EU's existing institutional arrangements with Africa, the creation of a dedicated pan-African envelope that can be systematically and jointly programmed, the modalities for implementation, the tools for monitoring and the place of civil society in these arrangements cannot just be left to happen, but need to be actively discussed and established.