

NOTA

EU-AFRICA RELATIONS FOLLOWING THE 4TH EU –AFRICA SUMMIT¹by **Ville Suutarinen**Programme Manager in the African Peace Facility of the European Commission²by **Alvaro Benlloch Miranda**Desk Officer for relations with Libya in the European External Action Service (EEAS) of the European Union³

The fourth EU-Africa Summit took place in Brussels on 2-3 April 2014 to discuss the future of EU-Africa relations and reinforce links between the two continents under the banner of “Investing in People, Prosperity and Peace”. The two-day summit, which produced three documents of significance –a political declaration, a roadmap for 2014-2017, and a separate declaration on migration– is being touted as a break from the past in relations between Africa and Europe. The theme for the summit illustrated the intention to change the continental narrative away from crisis management and a donor/recipient relationship towards economic development.

Indeed, the Brussels summit underlined the commitment of both continents to the objectives set out in the 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). Previous summits had taken place in Cairo (2000), Lisbon (2007) and Tripoli (2010). In Brussels, a desire to develop a solid business-like partnership was evident: the summit was the biggest one that the EU has ever organised and attendance at Head of State level, also on the European side, was very high.

A notable success of the summit was the organisation of a Business Forum attended by over 1000 stakeholders who discussed ways of improving the business climate in Africa. The demand for this event was overwhelming and surprised everyone, including the organisers. A major success factor that emerged from the Forum was a willingness to deepen economic cooperation in order to provide a meaningful counterbalance to China and other emerging economies.

At the Forum, African leaders stressed the importance of radically increasing European investment on infrastructure projects. A plea was made by several African Heads of State to put in place public-private partnerships. The fact that Africa is now enjoying the highest economic growth of any continent and has begun to attract multi-billion dollar investment in infrastructure from China has certainly reinforced the case for prioritising business⁴.

However, more contentious issues have not really seen any major agreements reached such as the Economic Partnership Agreements, the International Criminal Court,

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4. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/02/07-china-aid-to-africa-sun>

and views on gay rights. Furthermore, no common positions were reached on global issues such as climate change and the post-2015 development framework. According to insiders, this was partly down to the fact that the AU had not properly managed to consult its member states ahead of the summit. However, the EU was also lukewarm about the Africans' proposed wording for declarations on issues such as trade and climate change.

Despite the above-mentioned efforts to shift the focus towards economic issues, the peace and security component remained the focus of the attention for most participants in the summit. Especially crisis management issues like the announcement on the launch of the CSDP mission for the Central African Republic (EUFOR CAR) or the adoption of language on maritime security are cited by participants as being among the summit's main achievements.

The fact that peace and security was chronologically the first of the items to be discussed, also appearing first on the joint declaration, reflects the symbolic place in the ranking of relevance. This is probably inevitable considering the fact that African-led military operations would not be possible without current EU funding, and that economic development is preconditioned on such "stabilisation".

In this area, the JAES partnership definitely amounts to more than a HQ-to-HQ exercise in public diplomacy. Indeed, crisis management remains the single partnership area in which European and African interests can be most obviously aligned, and militaries in Africa stand to benefit from such cooperation.

However, the partnership in the peace & security area could move beyond the current military focus.⁵ A particular question that needs to be addressed is how the EU could make further good use of the continental approach to advance its interests on issues where cooperation from several African states is more difficult to secure. In this, the EU could use the EU-Africa summit to create synergies in its relations with African sub-regions.

The EU relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) are governed by the Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000, revised in 2005 and in 2010⁶. Currently, the ACP Group includes 79 countries: 48 from sub-Saharan Africa, 16 from the Caribbean and 15 from the Pacific region. The Cotonou agreement is thus a multilateral treaty, between the EU and mainly countries that have a past colonial link to it, involving development, trade and political elements. The current agreement runs to 2020.

As opposed to EU relations governing the rest of the continent, North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia) are covered through *ad hoc* Association Agreements negotiated bilaterally. The region is of crucial importance for the EU for different reasons (e.g. proximity, security, energy and migration). The regional EU policy covering these countries is the European Neighbourhood Policy⁷ (also including relations with eastern neighbours like Ukraine) which aims at accompanying national reforms in line with the EU *acquis*. "Everything but accession" summarises the EU approach to these partners under the ENP.

5. <http://fride.org/blog/bolstering-the-eu-africa-security-partnership/>

6. http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/overview/cotonou-agreement/index_en.htm

7. http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/index_en.htm

Migration is an area where the EU should use the JAES to create synergies between EU relations towards sub-Saharan Africa and the North African sub-region. There is public pressure prompted by the tragic migratory deaths in the Mediterranean Sea. However, support from the African side is not so straightforward due to conflicting interests. Similarly, arms smuggling and the terrorist threat in the Sahel region involving Cotonou countries (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso) as well as ENP countries (Algeria, Libya) could justify a consolidated approach. Take Libya and its southern neighbours where people and drugs are smuggled in through Libya's southern borders, whereas weapons flow mainly in the other direction.⁸ A solid international effort would be needed to curb it⁹ but at the EU-Africa summit there were no side meetings between the EU, Sahel, and Maghreb partners. Furthermore, the theme of arms proliferation was left out of the high-powered peace and security partnership during the summit¹⁰.

The *migration declaration* agreed to during the Summit stated that “[w]e commit to undertaking concrete actions to respond to challenges of migration and mobility at the appropriate level in a spirit of partnership, shared responsibility and cooperation”. However, a comprehensive effort was missing to set the agenda with a view to obtaining agreement on new forms of civilian cooperation across the sub-regions. The thriving business of human trafficking, earning smugglers and corrupt officials thousands of dollars, should be a priority for the EU-Africa security partnership (including softer measures such as awareness raising campaigns on the great risks migrants will face throughout their route to Europe¹¹).

The Cotonou Agreement's successive amendments have already increasingly politicised the EDF¹², allowing the inclusion of issues like migration and conflict management to the agreement. This has begun a process of cooperation between the EU and the African Union (AU) that has diverted intra-African funds from traditional development cooperation. This policy and cooperation is now flowing directly from the JAES partnership although the Cotonou agreement still provides the legal basis.

Some African states, like Uganda, have become very supportive towards the JAES partnership, allowing them to insist, “Africa must now be treated as an equal partner”.¹³ They have gone on to take proactive military roles under the JAES to wedge themselves into a position where they are more resistant in their bilateral relations with the EU under the Cotonou agreement.¹⁴ For example, the relatively minor Uganda has managed to escape severe consequences to its relations with the EU, even though President Museveni signed an anti-homosexuality bill, which drew widespread international criticism. In doing so, he openly defied “the West” by saying that that Uganda does not need aid.¹⁵

8. Cf. page 20, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libyas-Transition.pdf>

9. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/e5881820-78c4-11e3-a148-00144feabdc0.html#slideo>

10. The issue of proliferation was included under another, weaker partnership called the “Post-2015 Development Agenda”.

11. Cf. pages 23, 31-48: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52b43f594.html>

12. http://www.aprodev.eu/files/Africa_ACP/ACP-Cotonou/concord%20on%20cpa%20review%20ii%20february%202010-en.pdf

13. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201404282368.html>

14. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law became “essential elements” of the agreement under Article 8

15. In the past, President Museveni has also used the threat of withdrawing Ugandan troops from Somalia as a way of deflecting criticism.

Indeed, the Chinese do not ask African governments questions about democracy and human rights, thereby not making development aid dependent on these issues. The Chinese presence in Africa is becoming established and has been particularly swift in recent years, with their growing activity having a bearing on the “post-2020” period when the Cotonou Agreement is due to expire. While the ACP relationship may not disappear, it is bound to become increasingly irrelevant as more African countries adopt similar approaches to that of Uganda.

Since the Cotonou Agreement is expiring in 2020, can the EU bring itself to come up with a coherent pan-African policy? There is still time to reflect on opportunities to use future summits to address issues, which severely affect the EU. The nascent institution in charge of the EU’s foreign and security policy, the European External Action Service, which the High Representative heads, is still learning the ropes and needs time. The choreography of EU leaders at the recent summit was telling: Commissioner Stefan Füle, in charge of enlargement and neighbourhood policy, and hence in charge of relations with important Northern African countries, was simply not present.

On the approach to Sahel, some good decisions have already been taken: a meeting of Heads of EU Delegations in the Sahel and Maghreb countries took place in September 2013 to discuss the Sahel crisis from a cross-regional perspective. A second meeting is scheduled for June 2014 in Dakar. Thus the EEAS is slowly forcing itself to look beyond the EU’s contractual relations by interconnecting policy-making for both sub-regions (e.g. the creation of a Sahel Task Force with wide inter-service participation) and by establishing regular communication channels among the different instruments it has deployed in both regions (e.g. CSDP missions in Libya, Niger and Mali).

However, these efforts are incidental and it remains to be seen whether the High Representative could appoint a deputy for Africa to demonstrate the EU’s willingness to take a pan-African approach. However, a good start would be to create a genuine horizontal pan-African affairs division, which would coordinate the directorates in charge of North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

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