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One year after Lisbon: the EU-Africa partnership at work

P6_TA(2009)0151

European Parliament resolution of 24 March 2009 on One year after Lisbon: The Africa-EU partnership at work (2008/2318(INI))

(2010/C 117 E/02)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Joint Africa-EU Strategy ('Joint Strategy') and the first Action Plan (2008-2010) for the implementation of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, adopted by EU and African heads of state and government meeting in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December 2007,
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled 'One year after Lisbon: The Africa-EU partnership at work' (COM(2008)0617),
- having regard to the General Affairs and External Relations Council conclusions of 10 November 2008 on 'One year after Lisbon: The Africa-EU partnership at work',
- having regard to the Joint Progress Report on the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and its first Action Plan (2008-2010) adopted by the Africa-EU ministerial Troika in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 21 November 2008,
- having regard to the note of 17 December 2008 from the Pan-African Parliament's ad-hoc committee for relations with the European Parliament and the European Parliament's ad-hoc delegation for relations with the Pan-African Parliament to the Presidencies-in-office of the African Union (AU) and EU, the European Commission and the Commission of the AU on the role of the Pan-African and European Parliaments in the implementation and monitoring of the Joint Strategy,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2007 on the state of play of EU-Africa relations ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 November 2005 on a development strategy for Africa ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 ⁽³⁾, as amended by the Agreement amending the Partnership Agreement, signed in Luxembourg on 25 June 2005 ⁽⁴⁾ (the 'Cotonou Agreement'),
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to Articles 177 to 181 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Development and the opinion of the Committee on International Trade (A6-0079/2009),

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 263 E, 16.10.2008, p. 633.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 280 E, 18.11.2006, p. 475.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 317, 15.12.2000, p. 3.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 209, 11.8.2005, p. 27.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 378, 27.12.2006, p. 41.

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- A. whereas the objective of poverty eradication must remain very much at the heart of the Joint Strategy,
- B. whereas half the population of Africa still lives in poverty and whereas Africa is the only continent that is not progressing towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly as regards poverty reduction, child mortality, maternal health and the fight against HIV/AIDS and malaria,
- C. whereas the Joint Strategy aims to go 'beyond development', 'beyond Africa' and 'beyond institutions' to cover a broader range of African and global issues than in the past, such as energy, climate change and security, and to involve a wider spectrum of non-institutional actors,
- D. whereas over the last year most of the institutional architecture and innovative working methods of the Joint Strategy have been set up but little actual progress has been achieved on the ground,
- E. whereas, despite the Joint Strategy's explicit recognition of the fundamental role of the Pan-African and European Parliaments 'to review progress and provide political guidance to the partnership', they have yet to be involved in any structural and meaningful way in the establishment, adaptation and monitoring of the Joint Strategy,
- F. whereas there has been minimal involvement of civil society and local authorities, particularly on the African side, in the implementation of the Joint Strategy,
- G. whereas very little new funding has been made available to implement the Joint Strategy and, indeed, the relevant sources of funding were already fully programmed before the Joint Strategy was adopted,
- H. whereas bringing the European Development Fund (EDF) within the EU budget, as Parliament has repeatedly called for, would allow for greater policy coherence and parliamentary oversight of development spending,
- I. whereas Africa's share of global trade is falling and Africa is being excluded from the opportunities offered by globalisation,
- J. whereas capital flight, especially illicit capital flight, is causing African economies to haemorrhage billions of euros every year, while the 'brain drain' robs the continent of much of the intellectual capacity that is essential for its future development,
- K. whereas food production and food security in Africa have been declining as political priorities and have been starved of investment over the last decade, with potentially disastrous consequences, as the recent food price crisis highlighted,
- L. whereas Africa is underrepresented in the international organisations and multilateral forums that decide on many of the issues affecting the continent's future,
- M. whereas the longstanding EU-Africa relationship takes on a new significance with the emergence of non-traditional donors whose agendas and priorities for Africa present new risks and challenges,
- N. whereas it is essential to find synergies and avoid overlap between the institutions of the Joint Strategy and those of existing relationships, such as the Cotonou Agreement, the Euro-Mediterranean Strategy and the South Africa-EU Strategic Partnership,
- O. whereas the 2009 Cotonou revision will seek to clarify the future relationship of the ACP with the AU,
- P. whereas levels of awareness as to the aims and actions of the Joint Strategy are worryingly low and whereas – mainly in Africa – public awareness of and adherence to the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership are directly linked to the Joint Strategy's ability to deliver immediate and tangible results capable of improving the standard of living of African people,

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- Q. whereas the partnership should take into account that, although a 'partnership of equals' means that the EU and the AU are equal in terms of participation in the discussions and in policy setting, it should also address the stark reality that both continents and their institutions are still far from equal in terms of institutional development, decisional capacity and resources,

Setting up of EU-Africa architecture

1. Welcomes the fact that, one year after the adoption of the Joint Strategy, the main components of the institutional architecture for its implementation are finally in place and have started to function, underpinned by an Action Plan with deliverables and timetables, and that some progress has been made towards implementation of the Joint Strategy and its thematic partnerships; however, regrets that, by the end of the first year of implementation, some partnerships are still in the process of defining working methods and have not yet established deliverables, timetables and budget allocations;
2. Welcomes the fact that the EU and the AU met more often during the first year after the signature of the Joint Strategy than ever before;
3. Calls on the EU and AU Commissions and the Member States of the EU and the AU to complete as a matter of priority this institutional architecture by developing the parliamentary, civil society and local authorities components that should drive and sustain the process by giving it transparency, ownership and democratic legitimacy;
4. Welcomes the establishment of EU implementation teams with the participation of interested Member States not only because the financing of the Joint Strategy depends to a considerable extent on contributions from the Member States, but also because the direct involvement of Member States will contribute to increased awareness, continuity and sustainability of the actions foreseen in the Action Plan;
5. Urges the institutions of the Joint Strategy to concentrate fully on the necessary deliverables, given that the first Action Plan only runs for less than three years (2008-2010);

Role of parliaments

6. Reiterates its request to the EU and AU Commissions to take active steps to involve the European and Pan-African Parliaments in implementing, monitoring and providing political guidance for the Joint Strategy, in line with their status as key components of its institutional architecture;
7. Stresses the role of inter-parliamentary bodies between the European Parliament and African parliaments – such as the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) and the Euromed Parliamentary Assembly – in enhancing peace and security, good governance and democracy, as well as being effective platforms for cooperation and for addressing issues of common concern;
8. Takes note of the fact that the 11th Africa-EU Ministerial Troika meeting endorsed the first annual progress report on the implementation of the Joint Strategy and its first Action Plan, to which the above-mentioned Commission Communication constitutes the EU contribution;
9. Regrets however that that report has been drawn up without any consultation of or formal contribution from the European or Pan-African Parliaments;
10. Proposes that the Presidents of the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament systematically attend and address EU-Africa Summits to present those Parliaments' conclusions on the implementation of the Action Plan and suggestions for the future orientations of the Joint Strategy;

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11. Requests that, immediately prior to the spring Ministerial Troika, the members of the Ministerial Troika hold an exchange of views with representatives of the competent bodies from the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament during which the Parliaments can present their suggestions and recommendations on the latest joint annual progress report; suggests that the discussion of the Parliaments' suggestions and recommendations be put on the agenda of that Ministerial Troika meeting; expects that the subsequent joint annual report - adopted during the following autumn Ministerial Troika - will indicate how these suggestions and recommendations have been taken into account; requests that the Parliamentary representatives also meet the Troika Ministers in the margins of the autumn Troika meeting;

12. Considers that the Pan-African and European Parliaments should participate at an appropriate level in both the joint expert groups and the AU-EU task force;

13. Welcomes the fact that the European Commission has established a EUR 55 million support programme in the 9th EDF for strengthening the capacities of the AU institutions; insists once again that part of this budget must be made available for strengthening the administrative and operational capacity of the Pan-African Parliament and calls on the Commissions to draw up the action plans for the use of these budgets in close consultation with the Pan-African Parliament and in cooperation with the European Parliament;

14. Recommends that the part of the budget earmarked for the Pan-African Parliament be directly administered by the Pan-African Parliament, once this Parliament has built up the necessary administrative capacity to do so and has fulfilled the requirements contained in the EC's financial regulation (in particular Article 56 thereof) ⁽¹⁾ for allowing the Commission to implement the budget by indirect centralised management;

15. Invites the EU and AU Commissions to simplify procedures to ensure direct and effective dialogue with Parliaments in order to avoid unacceptable delays, taking due account of their procedural specificities;

16. Calls yet again for the budgetisation of the EDF, and in the meantime, asks the Commission to keep the European and Pan-African Parliaments informed at all stages of the budgetary process;

Civil society and non-state actors

17. Believes that if the Joint Strategy is to be a genuine 'broad-based and wide-ranging people-centred partnership', it must effectively involve civil society and local authorities and facilitate their effective participation in the work of its implementing bodies;

18. Regrets that, whereas the Action Plan indicates that each of the Africa-EU Partnerships is open for a wide range of actions, overwhelming emphasis is placed on state actions; stresses that the input and involvement of parliaments and non-state actors, such as civil society organisations, local authorities and other non-state actors in the process, need to be deepened and further clarified;

19. Welcomes the African Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) as a vehicle to build a partnership between African governments and civil society; is however concerned at the low level of involvement of African civil society in the implementation of the Joint Strategy and calls for immediate efforts, particularly on the African side, to set up, in close cooperation with interested stakeholders, procedures for the identification, mapping and effective involvement of representative African non-state actors;

20. Calls on the European Commission to develop appropriate capacity building tools for African civil society organisations specifically aimed at enhancing their capacity to engage with the Joint Strategy's implementation;

⁽¹⁾ Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1).

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Partnerships

21. Notes that the Joint Strategy should also address issues which, although formally belonging to a different institutional architecture, have a profound influence on the future of Africa and which shape the relationship between the two continents, such as the economic partnership agreements (EPAs) and the relationship between the EPA regional groupings and other existing regional groupings in Africa (including the Regional Economic Communities), the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement, the Euro-Mediterranean Strategy, the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership, and Africa's relationship with new global players such as China and Brazil;

22. Believes that sustainable economic, social and environmental development can only take place in countries that offer guarantees of peace, democracy and human rights;

23. Calls on the European Commission, the Council and the African side to ensure coherence between this strategy and the other policies which may have an adverse impact on the promotion of a new strategic partnership between the EU and Africa, in particular commercial, environmental, migration and agricultural policies; stresses that the political dialogue between the EU and Africa should cover these issues;

24. Stresses that, to combat poverty effectively, which must remain at the heart of the Joint Strategy, the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership must help stimulate sustainable economic and social development, attract foreign investment, promote equitable international trade, and contribute to creating the conditions under which African countries can gradually take their place in the global economy;

Peace and security

25. Welcomes the progress made on the peace and security partnership; takes note of the AU-EU political dialogue on crisis situations in Africa and beyond; stresses that this dialogue needs to address the whole range of peace and security issues from conflict prevention and conflict resolution to post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building, including in-depth dialogue on the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect principle;

26. Calls for due priority to be assigned to implementing the African peace and security architecture; stresses once again that the EDF is not an adequate financing source for future replenishment of the African Peace Facility; is of the view that EDF spending should comply with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria for official development assistance; reiterates its call for a definitive solution for African Peace Facility financing;

27. Welcomes the establishment in September 2008 by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon of an AU-UN Panel of distinguished persons to identify ways in which the international community can support AU peacekeeping operations established under a UN mandate;

Governance and human rights

28. Points out that the concept of governance should be a measure of how well a society functions, through law and order, respect and active promotion of human rights, the fight against corruption, wealth creation and transparent and equitable wealth distribution and essential health and social services; stresses that external actors must not assess governance solely on externally-imposed criteria but instead on the basis of mutually agreed and shared values and standards;

29. Stresses the importance of sustainable democracy including good governance and democratic elections which must include support for parliamentary capacity building, and the involvement of civil society and local authorities in the political dialogue;

30. Stresses that governance must be improved on both sides: it is not only a priority in Africa but also on the European side which must improve governance and accountability as regards aid commitments and better donor coordination with a view to taking greater account of the so-called 'aid orphans'; stresses that national and continental parliaments, non-state actors and local authorities have an important role to play in this field;

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31. Calls for increased support for existing African initiatives, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which is the most serious effort yet by African countries to improve governance on the continent, and the various instruments put in place by the AU, which will increase African ownership of the process;

32. Expresses serious concern that the 'governance profiles' developed by the Commission for each ACP country, which will guide programming for development assistance in relation to the EUR 2 700 million additional funds under the 10th EDF, have been prepared without any participatory element; notes that eligibility for additional funds of beneficiary countries has been judged according to a set of criteria only one of which is directly linked to the MDGs; expresses dismay that the European Commission's 'profiles' risk hollowing out the APRM process; calls on the European Commission to consult and inform the European Parliament and the Council on the follow-up and the implementation of these funds in order to make sure they are allocated to governance initiatives to support the AU governance agenda and the APRM process;

33. Calls for the dialogue under the governance and human rights partnership to address impunity for human rights abuses, looking at best practice under national or international law, including the work of the international criminal courts established in Sierra Leone and Rwanda;

Trade, economic development and regional integration

34. Considers, as regards the partnership on trade and regional integration, that under the right conditions, increasing trade is an essential driver of economic growth, provided trade policies are coherent with development objectives; welcomes therefore the aims of this partnership to support African regional integration and to strengthen the continent's trade capacities;

35. Looks forward to a speedy conclusion to the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Doha Development Round, but insists that it must remain essentially a 'development round', favouring African nations' integration into the global economy, effectively reducing trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and abolishing agricultural export subsidies;

36. Believes that the EU should help African states to ensure that their agriculture is self-sufficient and to foster essential services and vulnerable domestic industries;

37. Insists that the final EPAs signed with African states must be first and foremost tools for development which respect the various beneficiaries' different capacities and levels of development;

38. Underlines the fact that EPAs must promote rather than undermine African regional integration; supports the AU's efforts to strengthen the Regional Economic Communities as the fundamental building blocks for the regional integration of the continent;

39. Insists that the European Commission and the Member States honour their commitment to provide by 2010 at least EUR 2 000 million a year in genuine 'aid for trade', the largest share of which must be for Africa; calls for a timely determination and provision of the share of the aid for trade resources; stresses that these funds should be additional resources and not be merely repackaging of EDF funding;

40. Calls on the partnership to address the wider aid-for-trade agenda, including the development of infrastructure, the promotion of business development and better regulation including rules of origin which are simpler and user friendly;

41. Calls on the partnership also to address economic aspects that although they are not necessarily trade-related, have important consequences for African economies, such as the need to take action to stem illicit capital flight and to promote international regulation of tax havens;

42. Calls on the Joint Strategy to recognise and support the role of migrants and diasporas in favour of the development of their home countries, by facilitating their investments in these countries and by reducing the cost of transfers;

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Key development issues

43. Insists, as regards the partnership on the MDGs, that even with more and better aid it will be difficult to meet these goals, and therefore urges EU Member States to uphold the commitments they recently restated at the Doha Conference on Financing for Development, as well as at the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, particularly as regards the volume of their aid, policy coherence, ownership, transparency and division of labour between donors;

44. Notes that basic health and primary and secondary education are crucial catalysts to achieving the MDGs; consequently encourages the African countries to make these areas one of the main priorities of their poverty reduction strategies; calls on the partnership to promote such a development, considering the European Commission commitment to spend at least 20 % of the Community's aid budget in these sectors; calls on the Commission to extend this commitment to the EDF; recalls that all efforts in this regard should include persons with disabilities; welcomes in this context the outcome of the first Joint Expert Group meeting and calls on the stakeholders involved to ensure that progress will be made in the year ahead;

45. Calls on the European Commission to take urgent action to carry out its commitments in the field of health as regards the conclusions and recommendations of the European Court of Auditors January 2009 report on 'EC Development Assistance to Health Services in Sub-Saharan Africa'; stresses the importance of increasing the European Commission's aid to the health sector in Sub-Saharan Africa during the 10th EDF midterm review to support its commitment to the health MDGs;

46. Encourages the member states of the EU and the AU to attach greater importance to African food security and food sovereignty and to support actions to increase the productivity and competitiveness of African agriculture, in particular food production for local markets, and promotion of 'green belts' around cities;

47. Calls on the Member States to include in their debates, within and beyond the Joint Strategy, the issue of equitable wealth distribution resulting from the exploitation of natural resources; insists that national revenues from natural resources should as a matter of priority be more equitably allocated in order to satisfy the basic needs of their populations, particularly in the fields of health, education, the conservation of natural resources and the environment, thus helping to achieve the MDGs;

48. Expresses concern that Africa's recent period of record growth will be reversed by the global economic slowdown, and stresses that the continent could be set back by decades as a result of falling commodity prices, lower investment flows, financial instability and a decline in remittances;

Other aspects of the strategy

49. Recalls, as regards climate change, that developed countries are primarily responsible for climate change, while its negative impact is greatest in developing countries; insists, therefore, that fresh funds are necessary if African states are to avoid being forced to pay a disproportionate price for adaptation to and mitigation of its effects; furthermore supports the joint EU-Africa declaration on climate change presented at the Poznan UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference in December 2008;

50. Demands, in the context of the migration and employment partnership, a fair and workable solution to the 'brain drain', which deprives many African nations of large numbers of skilled workers, particularly in the health sector;

51. Calls for the new EU 'blue card' scheme to discourage the depletion of skilled workers from developing countries in sectors where these countries suffer from labour shortages, particularly in the areas of health and education;

52. Calls on the European Commission to use the EU-Africa partnership to help African countries apply the flexibilities provided for in the Doha Declaration on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and public health, in order to facilitate access to affordable essential medicines in Africa;

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53. Encourages both sides, as regards the science and technology partnership, to aim to bridge the digital divide by stepping up cooperation on technology development and transfer, particularly concerning telephony and the Internet;

54. Expects the Joint Strategy to take specific steps to improve opportunities for women, children and people with disabilities in Africa, as these groups face particularly serious difficulties in developing countries;

55. Stresses that, if the Joint Strategy is to go 'beyond Africa', with greater EU-Africa cooperation within international bodies and in multilateral negotiations on issues like trade, human rights or climate change, the EU and Africa should work towards making international institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the WTO, more democratic and more representative and ensuring Africa can finally exert an influence in line with its size and status;

56. Calls once again on the EU institutions to create a specific financial instrument for implementing the Joint Strategy, centralising all existing sources of funding, in a clear, predictable and programmable way; questions to what extent the Joint Strategy will be able to achieve its lofty ambitions or offer genuine added value without any new funding whatsoever or even reprogramming of existing funding;

57. Calls on governments in the EU and in Africa to communicate more effectively and systematically to their people the actions and achievements of the Joint Strategy and to endeavour to broaden media coverage;

Looking ahead

58. Looks forward to a meaningful involvement of the European and Pan-African Parliaments as well as civil society organisations and local authorities, following the experience of the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December 2007, in the run-up to the third Africa-EU summit in 2010 and their active participation in the summit itself;

59. Calls on the EU and AU Commissions and Presidencies to agree to the proposals outlined above aimed at enhancing parliamentary involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the Joint Strategy;

60. Intends to generate inside the European Parliament the necessary coordination and synergy between all its bodies to support the implementation and monitoring of the Joint Strategy; repeats, in this respect, its intention to transform its ad-hoc delegation for relations with the Pan-African Parliament into a fully-fledged interparliamentary delegation;

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61. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the EU Economic and Social Committee, the AU Economic, Social and Cultural Council, the AU Commission, the AU Executive Council, the Pan-African Parliament, the ACP Council of Ministers and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.
