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## UNIDO BRUSSELS *Focus*

# COVID-19 Impact on **EU - Africa Relations**

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A Stronger Europe in the World

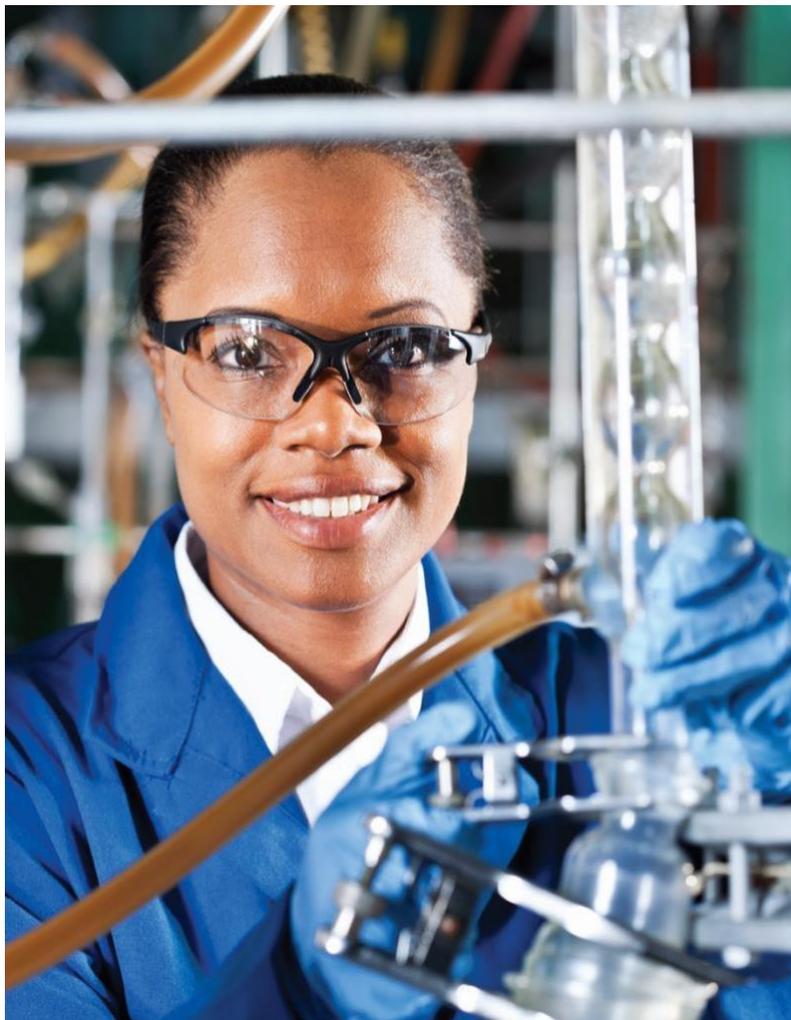


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# Executive Summary

Africa and the European Union (EU) cooperate through different frameworks such as the Joint Africa-EU Strategy or the Cotonou Agreement, and through regional programmes, including those for the Horn of Africa, Gulf of Guinea and Sahel region. This study aims at identifying the updates regarding some of these different frameworks, taking into account the recent challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**2020 is a pivotal year for EU-Africa relations**, with the 6th EU-African Union Summit taking place in October 2020, as well as the conclusion of the Post-Cotonou negotiations of the new partnership agreement between the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).

Moreover, the European Commission, together with the European External Action Service, launched a Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on a new EU-Africa Strategy in March 2020. The document addresses five separate partnerships, in line with the priorities, which will serve as a basis for further discussions at the 2020 October Summit in Brussels.

1. **A partnership for Green Transition and Energy Access** that aims to uphold the commitment of both the EU and Africa to sustainable development and the Paris Agreement. This encompasses both mitigation and adaptation measures. The proposed action here includes a variety of measures going from circular economy, sustainable value chains, smart urbanization models and businesses to safe and sustainable agri-food systems. It also insists on investing in strengthening scientific capacities in Africa, as it would drive innovation, which is key to drive green transition, as well as trade and could facilitate the adoption of sustainable and innovative business models.
2. **A partnership for Digital Transformation** which builds on the EU strategy of a Europe Fit for Digital Age, and aims to boost the continent's digital transformation of economies and societies through regulation, infrastructure and access to safe and affordable digital services. It will also focus on the need for education and vocational training opportunities.
3. **A partnership for Sustainable Growth and Jobs** that aims to enhance Africa's growing economy and young workforce firstly through both public and private sustainable investments, focusing on climate-resilient infrastructure, access to finance, better data in order to help identify the most efficient deployment of new sustainable energy sources, and the development of a value-adding private sector. Secondly, by deepening regional and continental economic integration, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Thirdly, by improving the business and investment climate through the adoption of policies and regulatory reforms. And finally, by providing people with the right skills for the job market.

4. **A partnership for Peace and Governance:** As prerequisites for any type of development, adapting and deepening its support to African peace efforts is of paramount importance for the EU. For that purpose, the EU would like a more structured and strategic cooperation, with a particular focus on regions where tensions and vulnerabilities are the highest. In this regard, it would like to ensure the integration of good governance, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and gender equality in action and cooperation and to secure resilience.
5. **A partnership on Migration and Mobility** which mainly focuses on ensuring a balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach to migration and mobility, and which would be guided by the principles of partnership, solidarity and shared responsibility and based on the respect for human rights and international law. The EU also promotes a continent-to-continent dialogue, while continuing to enhance the AU-EU-UN trilateral cooperation on the topic.

The report introduces the latest developments concerning the new EU-ACP (OACPS) Partnership Agreement, commonly known as **Post-Cotonou Agreement**, as well as the structure of the current cooperation framework between the two entities. The new partnership agreement is now expected to be concluded in December 2020. The Council of the European Union identifies 6 strategic priorities:

1. Human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, rule of law and good governance;
2. Human development and dignity;
3. Inclusive sustainable economic development;
4. Environmental sustainability;
5. Peace, security and justice;
6. Migration and mobility.

The OACPS negotiating directives favour the old agreement, finding the basis on the 3 previous strategic thematic pillars:

- (1) Trade, Investment, Industrialization and Services;
- (2) Development Cooperation, Technology, Science, Innovation and Research;
- (3) Political Dialogue and Advocacy.

Regarding the **EU partnership with G5 Sahel**, the latest EU-G5 Sahel Joint Declaration focuses on four pillars: (1) fight against terrorism, (2) strengthening security and defense capabilities in the G5 Sahel countries, (3) restoring the state presence and basic services in fragile areas throughout the territory, and (4) increasing development efforts. Lastly, this report focuses on the **impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on EU-Africa relations**. These vary from the impact on EU credibility to the incentive to push digital agendas, the need to rebuild green economies and the possible change in terms of Africa-Europe economic relations.

# Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AU	African Union
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
JAES	Joint Africa-EU Strategy
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
OACPS	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

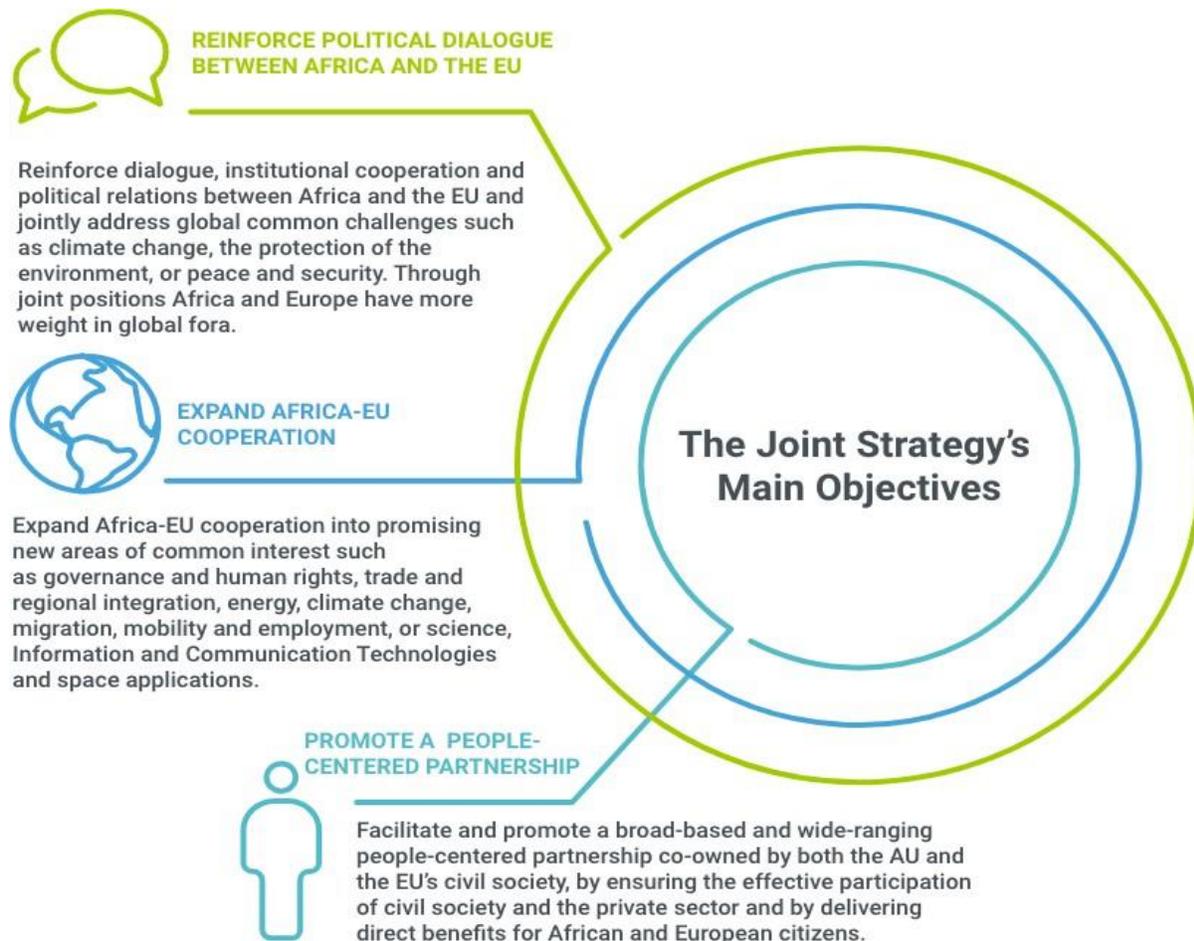
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# 1. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy

## 1.1. Current framework

The Africa-EU partnership started in 2000 at the first Africa-EU Summit in Cairo, Egypt. The current Partnership is defined by the Joint Africa-EU Partnership (JAES)<sup>1</sup>, adopted in 2007 by the EU and AU, as well as by African and EU countries, which acts as the formal channel for EU relations with African countries.<sup>2</sup> The JAES sets out the intention of both continents to move beyond a donor-recipient relationship towards long-term cooperation on jointly identified mutual and complementary interests.



Source: African Union<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Africa-EU strategic partnership - A Joint Africa-EU Strategy (2007) [Online]. Available [https://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/eas2007\\_joint\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](https://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/eas2007_joint_strategy_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> EU-Africa relations. (n.d.). [Online]. Available <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-africa/>.

<sup>3</sup> "The partnership and Joint Africa-EU Strategy". [Online] Available: <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/partnership-and-joint-africa-eu-strategy>

The strategy is implemented by multiannual roadmaps and action plans, which are adopted after each Africa-EU Summit of Heads of Governments. Since 2007, three roadmaps and actions plans have already been adopted. The last one in date is the Abidjan Declaration, which was adopted at the 5th Africa-EU Summit in 2017, and set 4 new strategic priorities for 2018 and beyond:



Source: African Union<sup>4</sup>

The Africa-EU partnership mainly focuses on cooperation at a continental level, between the EU and AU. As such, it complements the EU's other existing frameworks of cooperation between the EU and African countries.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2. Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa

Ahead of the 6th EU-African Union Summit in October 2020, as well as the conclusion of the negotiations of the new partnership agreement between the EU and the ACP, 2020 is considered to be a pivotal year for EU-Africa relations.

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<sup>4</sup> "The partnership and Joint Africa-EU Strategy" ([Online] Available: <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/partnership-and-joint-africa-eu-strategy>).

<sup>5</sup> The Partnership and Joint Africa-EU Strategy. (n.d.). [Online]. Available <https://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/partnership-and-joint-africa-eu-strategy>

The European Commission, together with the EEAS, launched in March a Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the new EU-Africa Strategy. The need for a new document was justified by the EU due to the increased geopolitical competition and the growing youth demographic in the continent.

It must be seen as part of the ongoing dialogue with African leaders and as a basis for future negotiations at the 2020 EU-AU Summit. The Communication, entitled "Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa", focuses on **5 different partnerships** and suggests 10 points as a basis for future actions.<sup>6</sup>

1. **A partnership for Green Transition and Energy Access:** this partnership proposes a variety of measures going from circular economy, sustainable value chains, smart urbanization models and businesses to safe and sustainable agri-food systems.
2. **A partnership for Digital Transformation:** it builds on the EU strategy of a Europe Fit for Digital Age and focuses on the need for education and vocational training opportunities.
3. **A partnership for Sustainable Growth and Jobs:** the partnership focuses on sustainable investments, regional economic integration, investment-attraction, education, innovation and social rights.
4. **A partnership for Peace and Governance:** as prerequisites for any type of development, ensuring peace and security in Africa is of pivotal importance to the EU.
5. **A partnership on Migration and Mobility:** the partnership mainly focuses on tackling the root causes of migration.

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<sup>6</sup> In **bold** are the 10 EU-Africa partnerships proposals which constitute the core of the Joint-Communication.



## ***A Partnership for Green Transition and Energy Access***

As African countries are particularly vulnerable to climate change, and in line with the commitment of both the EU and Africa to sustainable development, opting for a low-carbon, resource efficient and climate resilient future seems the best option.

**Action 1:** Maximise the benefits of the green transition and minimise threats to the environment in full compliance with the Paris Agreement

Such a proposed action includes a wide variety of measures going from circular economy, sustainable value chains, smart urbanisation models and businesses to safe and sustainable agri-food systems. It would also focus on reducing emissions and on providing sustainable energy for Africa's growing population and economy. Additionally, investing in strengthening scientific capacities in Africa would drive innovation, which is key to drive green transition, as well as trade and could facilitate the adoption of sustainable and innovative business models.

Finally, it would build on Africa's vast natural, unique biodiversity and ecosystems, like the forest water and marine ecosystems, to foster social and economic development while protecting it against environmental crime.

In order to achieve this green partnership, the EU has proposed to support the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions and help construct long-term strategies to reduce emissions and contribute to develop national adaptation plans. It also would like to launch a 'Green Energy' initiative, building on the recommendations of the High-Level Platform for Sustainable Energy Investments in Africa and a 'NaturAfrica' initiative to protect and reduce pressure on forests, water and marine ecosystems.



## ***A Partnership for Digital Transformation***

Within the framework of the EU new strategy of [a Europe fit for digital age](#), the EU proposes to:

### **Action 2: Partner with Africa to boost the continent's digital transformation**

According to estimations, a 10% increase in digital coverage could result in an increase of over 1% in African GDP.<sup>7</sup> The safe and affordable access to digital services could be achieved through investment in infrastructure and reliable sources of electricity along with the adoption of adequate regulations and policies. It comes with strong measures to ensure security, resilience and deterrence against cybercrime.

As a qualified workforce is needed, education and vocational training opportunities will be made available to the population by public and private institutions. The cooperation on Artificial Intelligence should also be responsibly developed and used, and so should the strengthening of personal data protection and the digitalisation of public administrations for the provision of e-services.

### ***A partnership for sustainable growth and jobs***

Africa has a huge renewable energy and biodiversity potential as well as a young workforce and a growing economy. The EU and Africa aim to enhance these with joint action on the 4 following points.

- ***Sustainable investments***

Today, the EU is the largest investor in Africa, with a foreign direct investment stock reaching EUR 222 billion. Public and private investments are crucial to stimulate entrepreneurship and sustainable economic diversification.

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<sup>7</sup> European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2020) Joint-Communication to the European Parliament and the Council - Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa.

The focal points should be on climate-resilient infrastructure, access to finance, better data in order to help identify the most efficient deployment of new sustainable energy sources, and the development of a value-adding private sector.

Action 3:

Partner with Africa to substantially increase environmentally, socially and financially sustainable investments that are resilient to the impacts of climate change; to promote investment opportunities by scaling up the use of innovative financing mechanisms; and to boost regional and continental economic integration, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement

- ***Regional and continental economic integration***

Action 4: Attract investors by supporting African states in adopting policies and regulatory reforms that improve the business environment and investment climate, including a level-playing field for business

- ***Business environment and investment climate***

Action 5:

Partner with Africa to rapidly enhance learning, knowledge and skills, research and innovation capacities, particularly for women and youth, protecting and improving social rights, and eradicating child labour

- ***Education, skills, research, innovation, health and social rights***



## *A partnership for peace and governance*

As peace and security are prerequisite to any type of development, ensuring it in Africa is in both Africa and EU's interest.

### Action 6:

Partner with Africa to adapt and deepen the EU's support to African peace efforts through a more structured and strategic cooperation, with a particular focus on regions where tensions and vulnerabilities are the highest

- ***Peace and security***

Currently, the EU supports peace operations led by Africa through the African Peace Facility, as well as the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). At an operational level, EU Member States contribute to peace and security in Africa through Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and other security and defence deployments. In addition to these tools, the EU proposes to use the European Peace Facility as well, to address the challenges met by African security and defence actors on the field. It also plans to support Africa with a focus on an integrated approach to conflict and crisis, acting at all stages of the conflict cycle.

### Action 7:

Partner with Africa on integrating good governance, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and gender equality in action and cooperation", for any of these elements not being present would prevent the sustainability of security and development in the long term

- ***Governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law***

The EU want to adopt a more strategic and structured approach to human rights political dialogues with African countries, in complementarity with consultations with African regional organisations and the AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue.

For example, the EU will support concrete initiatives to reinforce civil society organisations and human rights defenders, will seek to continue supporting credible, inclusive and transparency electoral and democratic processes, and support initiatives for women and youth.

**Action 8:**

Secure resilience by linking humanitarian, development, peace and security interventions at all stages of the cycle of conflicts and crises

- **Resilience**



***A partnership on migration and mobility***

The causes of migration are manifold, including economic, political, due to ongoing conflicts or the impact of climate change. Therefore, migration and forced displacement will continue to be a source of challenge and opportunity for both Africa and Europe. A good management can lead to positive impacts on the two continents, which is why migration remains one of the main priorities of the EU-Africa Strategy.

Since 2015, the EU and Africa have developed a joint approach to managing migration and mobility, notably within the framework of the Valletta Action Plan and the Khartoum and Rabat Processes, which have led to a decrease in irregular arrivals in Europe, an improvement of the fight against smuggling, and a more sustainable way of assisting refugees in hosting African countries.<sup>8</sup>

**Action 9:**

Partner with Africa to ensure a balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach to migration and mobility", which would be guided by the principles of partnership, solidarity and shared responsibility and based on the respect for human rights and international law

The EU also promotes a continent-to-continent dialogue, while continuing to enhance the AU-EU-UN trilateral cooperation on the topic. At a bilateral level, the EU wants to develop tailor-made dialogues and partnerships with African countries.

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<sup>8</sup> Joint-Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, *op. cit.*



## ***Working together to implement the partnership***

Lastly, the Communication insists on the multilateral aspect of the cooperation, as it is the only way to address these global challenges effectively.

At a bilateral level, the EU also wants to intensify the cooperation with Africa, notably through AU-EU Head of State and Government summits and ministerial meetings, but also through people-to-people contacts. It also wants to ensure coherence between this strategy and the legally binding agreements already in place between the EU and African countries, like the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and the Organisation of ACP States.

Finally, on the EU side, the Communication insists on acting in unison, with EU Member States but also other actors, like the private sector, banks, local authorities, civil society *etc.* It also advances the idea of mobilising private finance to reach its goals. The European Commission also proposes that the new Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument, as of 2021, includes over 60% of funds available to it to Sub-Saharan Africa and the EU's neighbouring countries.<sup>9</sup>

### Action 10:

Partner with Africa to strengthen the international rules-based order and the multilateral system, with the UN at its core

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<sup>9</sup> Joint-Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, *op. cit.*

## 2. Cotonou Agreement

### 2.1. Current Framework

The Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) is considered the most advanced collaboration between the EU and some of the lowest-income countries in the world<sup>10</sup>. It was signed in 2000 and originally set to expire in February 2020. The deadline has then been postponed to December 2020, due to delays in the negotiations<sup>11</sup>, which officially started in 2018. The Agreement sets the relationship between the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)<sup>12</sup> which has 79 member states. The Cotonou Agreement builds over three essential pillars: political dialogue, trade and development cooperation and focuses on eradication of poverty and inclusive sustainable development.



Source: European Council<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Schefer, G. (2019). Post-Cotonou and the EU-African relationship A green light for a renewed cooperation? Bruges Political Research Papers 77/2019.

<sup>11</sup> Fox, B. (2020). Post-Cotonou delays complicate EU's new African vision. [Online]. Available <https://www.euractiv.com/section/africa/news/post-cotonou-delays-complicate-eus-new-african-vision/>

<sup>12</sup> The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States became the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States on 5 April 2020. It is now an international organisation. [Online]. Available <http://www.acp.int/content/african-caribbean-and-pacific-group-states-becomes-organisation-african-caribbean-and-pacific>

<sup>13</sup> "Infographic - EU relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries" [Online] Available: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/cotonou-agreement/>

## 2.2. Post-Cotonou Agreement

The Cotonou Agreement is the basis for ACP-EU development cooperation. It was scheduled to expire on February 2020, but the ACP and EU have agreed to extend it until the new ‘post-Cotonou’ agreement is concluded and signed (expected in 2021).

The current respective chief negotiators are Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen for the European Union and Robert Dussey, Togo’s foreign minister, for the OACPS. The OACPS’s negotiations maintain a similar structure as the expiring agreement, building on its three Strategic Thematic Pillars:

Trade, Investment, Industrialization and Services	Development Cooperation, Technology, Science, Innovation and Research	Political Dialogue and Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deepening intra-OACPS trade integration</li> <li>• Supporting the development of productive capacities</li> <li>• Strengthening Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)</li> <li>• Promoting Private Sector Development</li> <li>• Building economic resilience</li> <li>• Improving industrial opportunities associated to blue and green economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of adequate and predictable financial resources and technical assistance</li> <li>• Improve the conditionalities of Official Development Assistance (ODA)</li> <li>• Strengthen development finance cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange information</li> <li>• Foster mutual dialogue</li> <li>• Facilitate the establishment of agreed priorities and shared agendas</li> <li>• Promote human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law</li> <li>• Counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction</li> </ul>

In addition to this, the OACPS identifies the following as main objectives of a Post-Cotonou Agreement<sup>14</sup>:

- Alignment to the Agenda 2030 and SDGs and move in the framework of outcomes of major UN Conferences and Summits such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on

<sup>14</sup> ACP Group (2018).

Climate Change, the UN Declaration on the Right to Development and continental and regional agendas such as Agenda 2063 in Africa.

- Commitment to democracy, peace and security, post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation
- Promotion of regional integration. Respect for the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and proportionality in relation to regional and continental groupings
- Unequivocal support for multilateralism
- Promotion of preferential trade agreements, including those among OACPS countries, such as the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) or the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)
- Increase the role of the private sector in the social and economic transformation of OACPS Member States
- Provision of a dedicated multiannual financial mechanism to all OACPS States
- Inclusive policy formulation and program implementation with Non-State Actors and promoting cultural cooperation
- Enhancement of the preferential trade agreements, in both goods and services

During an interview held in summer 2019<sup>15</sup>, Viwanou Gnassounou, Assistant Secretary-General of the OACPS, highlighted two main priorities for the negotiations on OACPS side:

1) Equality in the partnership: he spoke against unilaterally levied sanctions by the EU against countries such as Togo, Burundi and Zimbabwe;

2) Support for private sector development. "The new partnership must really help us to achieve industrialization and develop our countries' economies.

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<sup>15</sup> Post-Cotonou Agreement: "The ACP Group could be the OECD of the countries of the global South". [Online]. Available <http://www.acp.int/content/post-cotonou-agreement-acp-group-could-be-oecd-countries-global-south>

### 3. EU partnership with G5 Sahel

The EU's intervention in the Sahel region is based on the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel and its Regional Action Plan 2015-2020 as well as the five pillars of the action plan adopted at the 2015 Valetta Summit.<sup>16</sup> Following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2391, the EU also provide significant support for the G5 Sahel governances structures, for the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the implementation of the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme (PIP) and Emergency Programme.<sup>17</sup>

Since July 2017, the EU is also one of the twelve members of the Alliance Sahel, which is a “mechanism for improving the coordination of partners so as to deliver faster, more effective and better targeted assistance to vulnerable areas”.<sup>18</sup> Through this partnership, the EU is contributing to many different projects, focusing on six priorities: youth employability, education and training; agriculture, rural development and food security; energy and climate; governance; decentralization and support for rolling out basic services; and internal security.<sup>19</sup>

The EU thus remains the leading partner and donor in the Sahel region. **Its approach encompasses three different aspects:**

#### 1 The diplomatic and political dialogue of the EU with the G5

This includes notably ministerial meetings, the implementation of the EU Sahel Strategy, the Regional Action Plan and the Malian peace process.

#### 2 Development cooperation support to G5 Sahel countries

The support is up to 8 billion euros from 2014 to 2020 (mainly coming from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the European development fund). The EU has also provided more than 250 million euros to G5 populations in the last two years for humanitarian aid.

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<sup>16</sup> European Council. (2015). VALLETTA SUMMIT, 11-12 NOVEMBER 2015 ACTION PLAN. [Online]. Available [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action\\_plan\\_en.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> S/RES/2391 (2017). [Online]. Available <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2391>

<sup>18</sup> Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Sahel Alliance. [Online]. Available <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/crises-and-conflicts/g5-sahel-joint-force-and-the-sahel-alliance/>

<sup>19</sup> Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères.

### 3 The support of security and stability in the Sahel region

This is done through three Common Security and Defence Policy missions:

- 1) EUTM Mali: Mission that aims to train the Malian Armed Forces.
- 2) EUCAP Sahel Mali: Civilian mission that assists and advises Mali's internal security forces. The EU provides training and strategic advice to the Malian police, gendarmerie and national guard, and to relevant ministries.
- 3) EUCAP Sahel Niger: This mission has the same purpose as EUCAP Sahel Mali, but in Niger.

#### Recent development

January 2019	13 May 2019	20 January 2020
<p>The Sahel Alliance announced the implementation of around 730 projects by 2022, with a global funding of 11 billion euros.<sup>20</sup></p>	<p>The Council of the European Union reiterated the importance of EU involvement in the Sahel region, as the latter is considered as a strategic priority for the former and EU Member States<sup>21</sup>. On top of strengthening its current engagements, the ministers also stressed the importance of the G5 Sahel countries' own efforts to improve governance, development and security throughout the region.<sup>22</sup></p>	<p>A meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU addressed the issues currently faced by the Sahel region. Talking about the "deteriorating security and humanitarian situation"<sup>23</sup>, the ministers underlined the necessity to renew and scale up the existing Sahel strategy in order to "increase the impact of EU's action in support of security, stability and development"<sup>24</sup>. They also emphasised the importance of "an integrated approach ensuring maximum synergies between the different actors involved and resources deployed, as well as ensuring ownership of the G5 Sahel countries"<sup>25</sup>.</p>

<sup>20</sup> The Sahel Alliance. [Online]. Available <https://www.alliance-sahel.org/en/sahel-alliance/>

<sup>21</sup> Council of the EU. (2019, May 13). "The Sahel is a strategic priority for the EU and its member states": Council adopts conclusions. [Online]. Available <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/05/13/the-sahel-is-a-strategic-priority-for-the-eu-and-its-member-states-council-adopts-conclusions/>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Council of the EU, 'Outcome of the Council Meeting' (Brussels, 20 January 2020) 5192/20. [Online]. Available <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/42196/st05192-en20.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

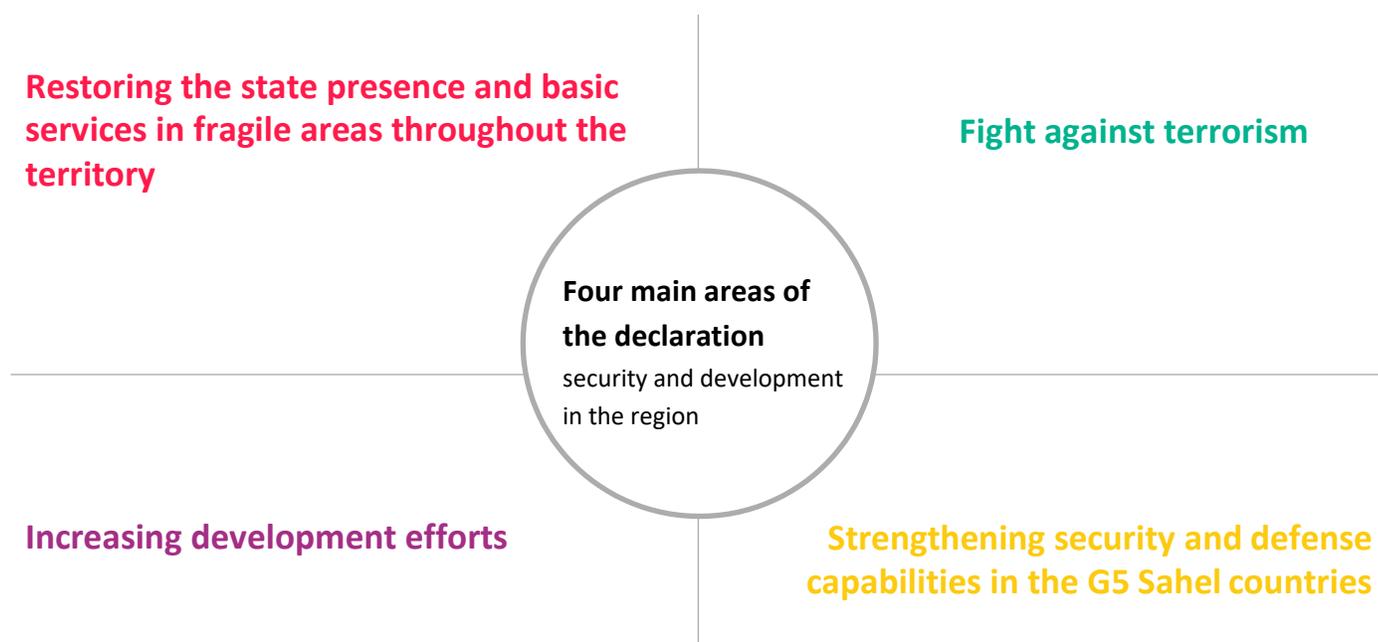
<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

The Sahel and Africa in general is **one of the priorities of the Von Der Leyen Commission** and a new strategy is deemed to be adopted this year.<sup>26</sup>

## Joint Declaration

On the 28 April 2020, the leaders adopted a Joint Declaration of the members of the European Council with the G5 Sahel Member States.<sup>27</sup>

They underlined the centrality of the UN's efforts and coordination role, including the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its Support Plan, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the UN Office for West Africa. They recalled the African Union's coordinating role and also welcomed the growing engagement of ECOWAS and the WAEMU as well as the establishment of a "Coalition for the Sahel" as a framework for political and strategic engagement.



<sup>26</sup> Gros-Verheyde, N. (2020, January 12). Le Sahel doit être une priorité. Une partie de l'avenir de l'Europe se joue en Afrique. (Entretien avec Josep Borrell). [Online]. Available <http://club.bruxelles2.eu/2020/01/leurope-est-engagee-en-premiere-ligne-au-sahel-entretien-avec-josep-borrell/>

<sup>27</sup> European Council. (2020, April 28). Joint declaration of the members of the European Council with the Member States of the G5 Sahel. [Online]. Available <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/04/28/joint-declaration-of-the-members-of-the-european-council-with-the-member-states-of-the-g5-sahel/>

## 4. EU-Africa partnership and the pandemic

### 4.1. The EU's global response to the pandemic

#### Key messages

- The **Team Europe package** aims to support partner countries during the COVID-19 crisis and the recovery, reaches more than **EUR 20 billion**. The European Commission and the European Investment Bank have already pledged financial support amounting to more than EUR 18.8 billion from existing programmes.
- The EU will help the most vulnerable countries in Africa, the EU's neighbourhood – the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partner countries, the Middle East and North Africa, parts of Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.
- It will focus on responding to the immediate health crisis and the resulting humanitarian needs, on strengthening health, water and sanitation systems and on mitigating the immediate social and economic consequences.

#### i. The Team Europe package<sup>28</sup>

At the beginning of April, the European Union launched its "Team Europe" package to support partner countries in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. The objective of this approach is to combine resources from the EU, its Member States, and financial institutions, in particular the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

This response mainly focuses on addressing the immediate health crisis and possible socioeconomic consequences. To this end, the EU will secure financial support to partner countries for more than EUR 18.8 billion from existing External Action resources.

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<sup>28</sup> "Overview of the European Commission's Response," [Online]. Available: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/overview-commissions-response\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/overview-commissions-response_en).

The bulk of the funding comes from the reorientation of existing funds and programmes to make them relevant to tackle the coronavirus specifically and includes EUR 5.2 billion in loans from the European Investment Bank that will be accelerated.

On 22nd April 2020, the Commission adopted a proposal for a EUR 3 billion macro-financial assistance (MFA) package to 10 Enlargement and Neighbourhood partners to help them limit the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

The European Union hosted an [international pledge](#) with a target of EUR 7.5 billion, starting on Monday 4 May 2020 and running until 27th June 2020. The aim is to gather significant funding to ensure the collaborative development and universal deployment of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines against coronavirus. To date, **EUR 9.8 billion has been raised**.

## ii. Team Europe and Africa

Africa is a priority for the EU, which is proposing to re-allocate, accelerate and prioritise EUR 3.8 billion by the European Commission from existing programmes to respond to the needs in the continent. In detail, excluding guarantee and funds by EIB, a total amount of EUR 2.1 billion is mobilised to support Sub-Saharan Africa region, meanwhile EUR 1.8 billion is to support Northern Africa. To further support Sub-Saharan Africa, EIB is mobilising another funding agenda of EUR 1.5 billion.

The EU's package includes direct bilateral support to countries, as well as funding to international organisations such as the WHO and other UN agencies. Support will focus on strengthening preparedness and response capacities of countries with the weakest healthcare systems. The EU is also funding research, which is helping to detect and prevent the transmission of the coronavirus in Africa.

The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) is in particular determined to address basic health needs of vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants. Under the EUTF, the EU is working closely with all its partners on the ground to ensure equal access to the healthcare system and strive for disease prevention and health promotion especially among the most vulnerable such as populations on the move.

## 4.2. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on EU-Africa relations

*This section compiles the opinion of various actors on the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on EU – Africa relations. It does not reflect the position on the EU, UNIDO or the UN.*

After the start of the outbreak, the new EU-Africa strategy was quickly put aside to prioritise the resolution of the current health crisis. However, we need to anticipate the impact that the latter is likely to have on those countries at a sanitary level, but also at an economic and political level. Therefore, one should ask the question of the effects of the coronavirus on EU-Africa relations. Will it create new opportunities or reveal both parties' weaknesses?

In order to answer this point, **Mr. Geert Laporte, Director of the European Think Tanks Group and Deputy Director of ECDPM**, has identified 10 potential impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.<sup>29</sup> This section will build on these categories, explaining the author's views while completing them with additional sources.<sup>30</sup> Other points of reflection will also be explored in order to have the fullest possible overview of the crisis' consequences.

The **potential consequences** of the COVID-19 crisis on EU-Africa relations:

- EU's geopolitical credibility and influence put into question
- Africa-Europe economic relations could take a different turn
- Rebuilding green economies
- "Slowbalisation"
- An incentive to push digital agendas
- A-step towards ending conflicts
- Risk of democracies backsliding
- The EU-Africa partnership in the multilateral system still a distant dream
- A move away from aid-driven North-South arrangements
- The importance of a strong public service with quality healthcare
- Cancelling rather than delaying Africa's debt

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<sup>29</sup> Laporte, G. (2020, April 6). Europe-Africa relations after Corona. [Online]. Available <https://ettg.eu/2020/04/06/europe-africa-relations-after-corona/>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

## EU's geopolitical credibility and influence put into question

Since the beginning of the crisis, Member States have mostly acted in their own interests, undermining the EU's efforts to provide a coordinated response. While other international actors, like the UN or countries like South Korea, have delivered a strong example of leadership, the EU was criticised for its lack of unity.<sup>31</sup> Although the EU has been unsuccessful to take the lead at the beginning of the crisis, it is now catching up both internally and in Africa. Since a couple of weeks, the EU is starting to organise itself and has also taken initiatives to support Africa directly, with the announcement of a Team Europe package<sup>32</sup>, and indirectly, through UN agencies like the WHO. The EU also supports the decision from the G20 concerning a debt moratorium for 77 of the world's poorer countries<sup>33</sup>, while agreeing the bloc still needs to do more.<sup>34</sup>

## A change in Africa-Europe economic relations

While the EU is Africa's largest investor, the economic recession it will enter after the crisis is likely to affect the latter more. According to **Carlos Lopes**, African Union High Representative for Partnerships with Europe, the crisis is exacerbating the effects of an already difficult start of the year for Africa. This is mainly due to climate related causes and the volatility of the currency, deeply affected by the turbulences on the global market (including the trade war between US and China, the US withdrawing from the WHO and the oil war between Russia and Saudi Arabia).<sup>35</sup> With the coronavirus crisis, Africa's biggest economies such as Nigeria, Angola or Libya, which mainly rely on natural resources, oil and extractive industry, risk to lose a significant part of their revenues. Migrants remittances, which account for an important proportion of the stability in terms of balance of payments, are expected to go down by 30%.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Papagiannas, S. (2020, April 3). Lessons in leadership... for the EU. [Online]. Available <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/opinion/lessons-in-leadership-for-eu/>

<sup>32</sup> EUR 20 billions includes the contribution from EU member states and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). [Online]. Available Riegert, B. (2020, April 21). Coronavirus: Debt relief key to helping Africa, says EU Commissioner: DW: 21.04.2020. [Online]. Available <https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-debt-relief-key-to-helping-africa-says-eu-commissioner/a-53201524>

<sup>33</sup> Fox, B. (2020, April 16). G20 agree debt relief ahead of crucial IMF spring meetings. [Online]. Available <https://www.euractiv.com/section/development-policy/news/g20-agree-debt-relief-ahead-of-crucial-imf-spring-meetings/>

<sup>34</sup> Riegert (2020)

<sup>35</sup> ECFR Quarantimes #7 - with Carlos Lopes. [Online]. Available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wce2blqy7v0>

<sup>36</sup> ECFR Quarantimes #7 - with Carlos Lopes. [Online]. Available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wce2blqy7v0>

Because of the lockdowns, there will also be a halt in the construction sector and many promising start-ups and SMEs across Africa will probably close, which would in turn cause a massive loss of jobs.<sup>37</sup> All of these elements are pointing towards a much longer period of crisis for Africa, as two thirds of the growth is coming from domestic demand that is now very much limited due to the confinement.<sup>38</sup> As for the informal sector, predominant in poorer countries, the crisis will cause irreversible damage and increase the risks of famine, with estimates of 14 to 15 millions of jobs lost.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the new African Continental Free Trade Area ("AfCFTA") removing borders across 54 countries, which was supposed to become operational from 1 July 2020, will be delayed. However, according to **Vera Songwe**, executive secretary of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the crisis is also likely to have a positive impact on the long-term, from a trade level. Indeed, in their search for more personal protective equipment, a lot of African countries are launching their own production chains that will begin to supply the continent. As a result, this could lead to an increased intra continental trade, which is the primary objective of the AfCFTA.<sup>40</sup>

### **Rebuilding green economies**

With the health crisis, comes a reduction of the travel and the traffic, the production processes are disrupted, and people consume less. Consequently, a temporary decrease of greenhouse gas emissions can be expected, which means that some Member States might achieve the climate goals this year, in line with the EU Green Deal. However, this cannot be considered as the solution to the global climate crisis. Previous recessions have demonstrated that, after an economic downturn, can come an increase in global emissions. People start consuming again as economic incentive packages are put in place, and oil prices are low.<sup>41</sup>

In its Joint Communication, the EU chooses to partner with Africa for "a low-carbon, resource-efficient and climate-resilient future". However, this goal will be even harder to reach for African countries, as achieving an economic growth for an ever-growing population in parallel with a transition to low-

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<sup>37</sup> Laporte (2020)

<sup>38</sup> ECFR Quarantimes #7 - with Carlos Lopes. [Online]. Available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wce2blqy7v0>

<sup>39</sup> Friends of Europe interview with Vera Songwe, 8 April on livestream

<sup>40</sup> Friends of Europe interview with Vera Songwe, 8 April on livestream.

<sup>41</sup> Hedberg, A. (2020, April 6). The corona crisis: A catalyst for climate action? [Online]. Available <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/opinion/the-corona-crisis-a-catalyst-for-climate-action/>

carbon economies and green industrialisation is not an easy task.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it must be reminded that Africa contributes to just 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but some experts predicts it will be the continent that will be affected the most by climate change.<sup>43</sup>

However, for **Carlos Lopes**, the current crisis offers a unique opportunity to achieve a green economic transformation and industrialisation in Africa for three reasons. The first reason has to do with the prices of fossil fuels that have registered historic lows, which means that countries which have entangled their tax system to fuel subsidies can get rid of them and redirect the money to the greening of the economy. Secondly, the costs of producing renewable energy are now very competitive and, in most instances, it is cheaper and faster than to go to fossil fuels. Finally, the initial protectionist reaction of countries that are well positioned in the global value chains cut off Africa from imports on pharmaceuticals and protective equipment very early on in the crisis. However, this situation triggered a new wave of innovations on the continent, with some countries' informal sectors converting to participate indirectly in local value chains for protective equipment. The pharmaceutical industry, although operating with limited means, could also be boosted by the crisis. A production closer to the consumption market means less emissions, which is also what the AfCFTA is going to promote.<sup>44</sup>

In order to support Africa in its efforts, the EU needs to invest. As the negotiations for the 2021-2027 EU Multi-annual Financial Framework are still ongoing, it is still to be seen what the effects of the corona crisis will be with regard to these commitments.<sup>45</sup>

Answering the question of the risk that the money assigned to climate policy might be diverted to address the health crisis, **Mrs Navarro**, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank, insisted on the fact that, despite the pandemic, the EU remained committed to its climate goals. She believes that it is possible to manage these two global threats at the same time.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the EU and its Green Deal is needed more than ever in order to ensure this remains a global priority.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Laporte (2020)

<sup>43</sup> How Africa could one day rival China | The Economist. [Online]. Available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8fl-u1UMVA>

<sup>44</sup> ECFR Quarantimes #7 - with Carlos Lopes. [Online]. Available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wce2blqy7v0>

<sup>45</sup> Laporte (2020)

<sup>46</sup> Friends of Europe, Emma Navarro Livestream. <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/events/europes-short-and-long-term-response-to-covid-19-will-the-recovery-align-with-eus-climate-ambition/>

<sup>47</sup> Dijkstra, B., & Martinelli, M. (2020, April 8). COVID19 crisis reveals a need for change in EU/Africa relations. [Online]. Available <https://www.euractiv.com/section/africa/opinion/covid19-crisis-reveals-a-need-for-change-in-eu-africa-relations/>

## "Slowbalisation"

After decades of removing trade and investment barriers, as well as allowing free movement of labour and people, citizens' livelihoods have improved. However, the globalisation process has shown weaknesses when a crisis like COVID-19 hit. According to **Mr Laporte**, both Africa and Europe's dependence on long global supply chains, just-in-time production and the lack of strategic stocks of medical supplies demonstrate that a greater self-reliance is needed. Even if it does not mean that the globalisation has to stop, and it will not, it is about "slowing down the pace (...) with a stronger role for an effective public sector (...) and less external dependency of African economies".<sup>48</sup>

## An incentive to push digital agendas

Digitalisation might be one partnership put forward by the new EU-Africa strategy that has been advantaged by the coronavirus outbreak. Social distancing measures have contributed to an increase in the use of technology for educational, work or leisure purposes.<sup>49</sup>

Some countries have even been using it in order to track people in an effort to limit the spread of the virus.<sup>50</sup> The question of how far you can go with technology also echoes concerns that have been expressed about its misuse, and the need for adequate regulatory and legal frameworks, especially for African countries. Indeed, out of 54 countries, only 14 have data protection and privacy laws, and only 9 of them are really enforced.<sup>51</sup> The increased use of technologic tools during lockdowns also raises the issue of the widening gap between more advanced regions and poorer areas where people do not have access to internet.

This is why digitalisation should remain a priority in the EU-Africa strategy. Moreover, it is important that young African's entrepreneurship initiatives are being given priority in the partnership along with e-commerce and digital financial services, as it might strengthen the economic integration of goods and services in Africa.<sup>52</sup>

## A step towards ending conflicts

In its new strategy, the EU planned to "adapt and deepen the EU's support to African peace efforts". It is still unsure whether the coronavirus crisis will be a catalyst for conflicts or will reduce them.

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<sup>48</sup> Laporte (2020)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Davidovich, J. (2020, March 17). The night is dark and full of tracking: 6 things to know for March 17. [Online]. Available <https://www.timesofisrael.com/the-night-is-dark-and-full-of-tracking-6-things-to-know-for-march-17/>

<sup>51</sup> Dijkstra, Martinelli (2020)

<sup>52</sup> Laporte (2020).

However, Saudi Arabia's declaration of a ceasefire in Yemen<sup>53</sup>, following the UN's call for a global ceasefire on the 23 of March<sup>54</sup>, could be a step towards the end of this five-year-old conflict. According to ECDPM, now is the time to build a momentum "to intensify EU support to African peace efforts and to step up EU-AU-UN cooperation, particularly when it comes to strengthening the links between humanitarian, development and peace and security efforts."<sup>55</sup>

### **Risk of democracies backsliding**

Along with the predicted economic crisis, restrictive measures could accentuate the frustration of the populations, and especially of younger generations.

### **The EU-Africa partnership in the multilateral system**

The EU remains Africa's largest external trading partner<sup>56</sup>, however, this position is declining.<sup>57</sup> This is the reason why it is important to show concrete signs of solidarity to Africa, now and in the aftermath of the crisis. Europe should also get away from "the old-fashioned cooperation and (...) build something new"<sup>58</sup>, more appealing to Africa's younger generations. With its population deemed to double by 2050<sup>59</sup>, the EU has an interest in strengthening Africa's position at a multilateral level. As President von der Leyen rightly stated in her opening statement at the 10th EU-AU Commission-to-Commission meeting plenary session, "the essence of multilateralism (...) is not only to sit down together to discuss things but it is also to implement them, to stay true to what you have accepted or what you have promised".<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Robertson, N., Tawfeeq, M., & Alkhshali, H. (2020, April 9). Saudi Arabia declares ceasefire in Yemen over coronavirus. [Online]. Available <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/09/middleeast/saudi-yemen-coronavirus-ceasefire-intl/index.html>

<sup>54</sup> Brzozowski, A. (2020, March 24). UN chief calls for 'immediate global ceasefire' amid COVID-19 pandemic. [Online]. Available <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/un-chief-calls-for-immediate-global-ceasefire-amid-covid-19-pandemic/>

<sup>55</sup> Laporte (2020).

<sup>56</sup> UNCTAD (2019). Economic Development in Africa, Report 2019. [Online]. Available [https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/aldcafrica2019\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/aldcafrica2019_en.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Lopes, C. (2020). 'Europe and African relations post COVID-19: time to add size, scale and speed'. [Online]. Available <https://theconversation.com/europe-and-african-relations-post-covid-19-time-to-add-size-scale-and-speed-135017>

<sup>58</sup> Laporte (2020)

<sup>59</sup> Tempest, M. (2016, August 26). Africa's population set to double by 2050, says new report. [Online]. Available <https://www.euractiv.com/section/development-policy/news/africas-population-set-to-double-by-2050-says-new-report/>

<sup>60</sup> Opening statement by President von der Leyen at the 10th EU-AU Commission-to-Commission meeting plenary session (2020). [Online]. Available [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_20\\_342](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_342)

## **A move away from a donor-recipient relationship**

Europe having been the second continent to be affected by the pandemic, narratives have shifted rapidly.<sup>61</sup> This might be the opportunity to move beyond the usual aid-driven approach to "add size, scale and speed to the debate".<sup>62</sup> However, The crisis will certainly have an impact on the new EU budget, and on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).<sup>63</sup> According to **Carlos Lopes**, in order to go through the coronavirus crisis, Africa would need no less than 5% of its GDP, which is the equivalent to 200 billion dollars.

## **The importance of a strong public service with quality healthcare**

The health care systems, undermined by years of austerity policies, must be rapidly and sustainably strengthened.<sup>64</sup> In the short and medium term, it means that the EU will have to mobilise enough support to "restore the balance between economic development and the strengthening of an effective public service and quality healthcare that should also be accessible to the most vulnerable groups in European and African societies."<sup>65</sup> In the long term, it involves focusing on institutions being improved.

## **Cancelling or delaying Africa's debt?**

While G20 leaders have agreed on a debt moratorium for the poorest countries, some, like the Jubilee Debt Campaign group, claim that the international community should cancel, rather than delay, a part of Africa's debt in light of the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>66</sup> Cancelling part of Africa's debt would be interesting for the future of the EU. It is indeed a way to avoid future migrations flows and conflicts caused by the human, socio-economic and security consequences of a continent that cannot repay its debts.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Shiferaw, L. and Mucchi, V (2020). 'Turning the tables: African and European narratives in the time of Corona' [Online]. Available <<https://ecdpm.org/talking-points/turning-tables-african-european-narratives-time-corona/>>.

<sup>62</sup> Lopes (2020).

<sup>63</sup> Laporte (2020).

<sup>64</sup> Dijkstra, Martinelli (2020).

<sup>65</sup> Laporte (2020).

<sup>66</sup> Williams, O. (2020, April 16). G20 Agrees Debt Relief For Global Poor; Will Investors Follow? [Online]. Available <https://www.forbes.com/sites/oliverwilliams1/2020/04/16/g20-agrees-debt-relief-for-global-poor-will-investors-follow/#c7bd1fe2366e>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

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