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# Africa – EU Civil Society Forum

A people centered strategy

11-13 July 2017, Tunis, Tunisia



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP  
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE

## Africa-EU Civil Society Forum Declaration Tunis, 12 July 2017

1. We, representatives of African and European civil society organisations meeting at the Third Africa-EU Civil Society Forum in Tunis on 11-13 July 2017, wish to stress the importance of fostering a space for civil society organisations of both continents as independent actors and integral partners within the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). We take cognizance that the strategy could not be people-centred without the full and free participation of organisations representing the different sectors and interests of society. Furthermore, we wish to reiterate that the JAES, the Action Plan and the Roadmap remain important instruments for realising the long-term goal of sustaining strategic partnership between Africa and the European Union based on a shared history, a strong political relationship, common values and close cooperation.
2. The forum deliberated various aspects of the JAES but focused on five thematic areas: Conflict prevention, peace building and refugees; Democratic governance and civic participation; Human development; Decent work, universal social protection and social economic development; and a Sustainable future for our planet in the context of climate change and natural disasters, as crucial developmental themes for the joint consultation. Cross-cutting issues such as migration and mobility, gender equality and youth were mainstreamed in the debates. The forum discussed these themes in working groups and agreed to make their contributions in this regard as we approach the 5<sup>th</sup> Africa-EU Summit on 28-29 November 2017.
3. After deliberating in plenary sessions and working groups in order to set up a range of proposals to influence the decisions and outcomes of the forthcoming 5<sup>th</sup> Africa-EU Summit, we first of all observed that the space for CSOs has shrunk and that their visibility remains weak within the strategic framework. In this regard, the Tunis CSO Forum examined the challenges that have led to the current gap in the consolidation of civil society participation in the JAES. The CSO Forum regrets that the Joint Annual Forum (JAF) was never convened as planned last time in Brussels, and as such the main mechanism for civil society participation disappeared. We also noted that key previous action points were not followed through, despite the resolution made in the previous fora.
4. At this CSO Forum, we took note of the recent continental policy developments. Therefore, ensuring coherence with the African Union 2063 Agenda and the 2017 EU Communication “For a Renewed Impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership” became major factors in defining consensus on our proposals. To this end, we resolved to recommend to both European and African institutions and leaders as follows:

- To increase their political, financial and logistical support for a timely, transparent and inclusive involvement of CSOs, including those representing the diaspora, at all levels of decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the JAES, in an institutional framework that is clearly defined and targeted at this support;
- To make sure to organise Joint Annual Fora in close cooperation with all the stakeholders, including civil society representatives, and make sure that these meetings effectively feed into the reflections and choices of decision-makers;
- To identify and operationalise “entry points” in the Roadmap implementation, allowing a better involvement of CSOs and creating, on a case by case basis, dedicated spaces and mechanisms, or opening existing ones to CSO participation;
- To increase the flow and quality of information facilitating the preparation of CSOs’ meaningful inputs in the implementation of the Roadmap and all debates around the JAES;
- To support with financial means, including by facilitating access to funding, CSOs’ participation and activities, including advocacy and implementation of projects in the frame of the strategy while always respecting their full autonomy;
- To initiate, ten years after the launch of the JAES, a stocktaking exercise of achievements and shortcomings. This is a process in which CSOs should play a vital role;
- To adopt an actor-based approach to the representation of civil society in the JAES;
- To act upon political commitments to create a truly enabling environment for civil society participation;
- Enhance dialogue between governments and CSOs including youth, women, migrants and refugees, diaspora, workers, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and any other groups left behind, as part of an inclusive multi-stakeholder policy process.

Acknowledging the progress, challenges and opportunities of the JAES, **we recommend the following actions:**

#### ON CONFLICT PREVENTION, PEACEBUILDING AND REFUGEES

1. Strengthen the role of civil society in the prevention of violent conflicts and in inclusive regional and continental early-warning systems.
2. Maintain the focus on people-centred security (i.e. human security) in the JAES policy document and translate it into actions.
3. Acknowledge the interdependence between governance, development, peace and security through a comprehensive approach and ensure that this is translated into financial and institutional mechanisms.
4. Ensure the inclusion of women and youth in mediation and peace-building efforts and provide resources and funding in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and all other relevant resolutions especially UN Security Council Resolution 2250, and the Maputo Protocol.
5. Support capacity building of CSOs on justice and security best practices, programmes and operations and make their results widely available (e.g. through an online platform).
6. Create the space and mechanisms and allocate resources for CSOs to effectively engage in the design, monitoring and evaluation of justice and security programmes and operations.
7. Open additional legal channels for migration and promote the right to free movement of people.

8. De-link development aid from migration flow management and stop securitising migration and delocalising borders, and fight all forms of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants.
9. Return to an inter-continental dialogue based on Migration and Mobility Dialogue (MMD).

#### ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

1. Ensure that, in the framework of the Africa-EU Partnership, civil society's role and capacities in promoting political and societal resilience on both continents are acknowledged and are given the space and resources to be translated into actions.
2. Protect the space for civil society and create an enabling environment so civil society can freely operate, influence policies, and address violations of human rights.
3. Focus the partnership on accountable and inclusive political systems beyond electoral processes and take into account other forms of democratic civic engagement.
4. Use the Africa-EU Partnership to build on the ongoing African Union initiatives to bring the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture closer together, and support similar initiatives on the European side, in order to increase governance and human rights monitoring of security forces, including peace support operations, by civil society and parliaments.
5. Ensure the domestication and implementation of global and regional frameworks on gender equality and women's rights and increase CSOs' capacities to participate in decision-making and hold governments accountable to these frameworks.
6. The Africa-EU Partnership should ensure sustainable support and funding for development and capacity building of youth organisations, and guarantee more inclusion of all youth, including diaspora youth, in the design, implementation and monitoring of youth-related policies. Consequently, removing barriers for youth civic and political participation is crucial.
7. Promote governance structures and policies with the aim of building functional human rights-based and inclusive social models that foster mobility and safe and regular circular migration at the national and international levels.
8. Defend, support and respect the autonomy and role of social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) by ensuring their involvement in the design and implementation of relevant reforms and policies, also by boosting the effectiveness of social dialogue at all relevant levels, which is conducive to collective bargaining.

#### ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

1. Prioritise policies and investments in public services such as health, education and social protection for all and place these at the heart of the Africa-EU Partnership.
2. Invest in public services and regulate competition in the private sector in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. Ensure that civil society organisations, as actors of governance, can play the role of watchdogs, implementers and service providers, complementing and not substituting governments.
4. Foster inclusive, comprehensive and high-quality education in all its forms and approaches, including the transfer of knowledge and youth exchange programmes.
5. Promote science, technology and innovation as key drivers of sustainable development.
6. Meet commitments in Official Development Aid (ODA), in particular the European Union's 20% benchmark for health and basic education and the 15% benchmark of the World Health Organisation's Abuja Declaration, and not divert ODA to issues such as security, border control and migration management.
7. Promote investments and policies that ensure Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) focusing on women, girls, marginalised populations, people with disabilities and youth.

8. Promote gender equality as a standalone and cross-cutting priority and mainstream it throughout human development.
9. Recognise and promote the role of the diaspora, including youth diaspora.

#### ON DECENT WORK, UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Promote the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Decent Work Agenda at the core of the JAES, as recognised by ILO core labour standards and conventions and other international frameworks, in coordination and engagement with civil society, as part of an enabling environment allowing freedom of association and collective bargaining.
2. Involve civil society in the implementation and monitoring of the EU External Investment Plan (EIP), in blending and in public-private partnerships, which should follow national development priorities and not lead to privatisation of essential public services. ODA should continue to act for sustainable development and poverty reduction and not become a subsidy to businesses.
3. Prioritise domestic resource mobilisation by strengthening national tax systems, by tackling tax evasion, illicit financial flows and corruption, by ensuring that international and local private sector actors pay their fair share of taxes and by cancelling odious debts.
4. Foster decent work creation and employability through social economy initiatives, such as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and cooperatives, upskilling, entrepreneurship, life-long learning, universal education, inclusive vocational training, science technology and innovation, and the transition from an informal to a formal economy.
5. Prioritise the specific needs of youth, including decent employment opportunities, tackling the brain drain and child labour; the needs of women, including combating discrimination; as well as access to and adaptation of the labour market for persons with disabilities and generally all persons facing discrimination in accessing the labour market.
6. Enact all gender equality commitments, in particular to formalise women's paid and unpaid work, close the gender pay gap, and implement living wages and measures to promote equal access to social protection to ensure that the rights of women, including maternity protection, are upheld.
7. Support the provision of universal, affordable and inclusive access to social protection systems and floors, including community-based basic healthcare and health insurance, and sexual and reproductive healthcare, clean water and sanitation and universal access to renewable and affordable energy.
8. Develop mandatory frameworks, such as the UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights, to ensure the accountability of transnational companies to respect labour and trade union rights, human rights and environmental standards all along global supply chains.
9. Promote regional integration strategies in Europe and Africa and create a conducive environment for economic and structural transformation that fosters sustainable commodity-based industrialisation in Africa.

#### ON A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR OUR PLANET

1. Promote sustainable economic models, including ruralisation (invigoration of rural communities), through awareness raising, global education, knowledge-sharing and training on localisation of economies, green jobs and sustainable local agriculture, as well as other emerging sectors such as the care, social and solidarity economy.
2. Harness social participation in international trade agreements through establishing joint consultative committees, parliamentary oversight, dedicated sustainable development chapters and joint monitoring mechanisms, in line with ILO principles, SDG 10 and the African Union 2063 Agenda.

3. Democratise and formalise economic governance, to ensure tax justice, the elimination of illicit financial flows, and an end to corruption, inter alia in the extractive industries, including by considering the transformation of the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters into an intergovernmental, transparent and accountable organisation.
4. Promote inclusive climate governance at local, national, regional and international levels, in order to enforce international climate commitments.
5. Increase awareness and capacity of vulnerable groups, including environmentally displaced peoples and climate migrants, small-scale farmers, young and women farmers and community groups, in order to build their resilience in the face of environmental challenges.
6. Domesticise international agreements with binding commitments at the national level.
7. Protect an equitable access to land and promote transparent management of natural resources as a guarantee of inclusive and sustainable human development.

*This joint declaration is the result of a long and fruitful dialogue between diverse civil society actors. It will guide our advocacy efforts in the run-up to and beyond the 5<sup>th</sup> Africa-EU Summit. In this regard, we request a meaningful space during the Summit to present our recommendations. We hope that our requests become a stepping stone to a vigorous and structured dialogue between Africa and Europe that goes beyond the institutional level of the African Union and the European Union. This will lead us to a prosperous and peaceful future, with civil society at the core of intercontinental cooperation.*