



European Economic and Social Committee



**THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE**

AFRICA-EU ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STAKEHOLDERS' NETWORK

16 and 17 November 2017, Abidjan – Côte d'Ivoire

FINAL DECLARATION

In preparation for the *5th Summit of Heads of State and Government of Africa and the European Union*, representatives of European Union and African economic and social stakeholders came together in Abidjan on 16 and 17 November 2017 at a meeting organised jointly by the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Council (CESEC) of Côte d'Ivoire and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The participants aligned their stances on the partnership between Africa and Europe with a view to submitting a contribution to the forthcoming summit of heads of state and government on 29 and 30 November. Recommendations were made on topics of shared interest, namely: the contribution of economic and social stakeholders to future EU-Africa relations; the importance of agriculture and the agri-food sector to transform Africa; education and boosting young people's skills; and strategies to support the development of green economies.

More broadly, the participants emphasised the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Maputo and Malabo Declarations with a view to fostering prosperity while protecting the planet. To this end, they advocate strategies that boost economic growth and address a range of social needs, including education, training, health and job opportunities, particularly for young people, while at the same time continuing to tackle climate change and protect the environment.

The Economic and Social Councils and similar institutions and economic and social stakeholders,

1. WITH REGARD TO THE CONTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STAKEHOLDERS TO FUTURE AU-EU RELATIONS:

- 1.1 call for the AU-EU strategic partnership to be consolidated and deepened through dialogue between the two (2) continents that secures shared interests with mutual respect, with a view to tackling the challenges before us, in particular sustainable and inclusive development, healthy urbanisation, climate change, migration, mobility and employment, preserving peace and preventing conflict, combating terrorism, and combating poverty, inequality and illicit financial flows;
- 1.2 see the 5th AU-EU Summit, to be held in Abidjan on 29 and 30 November, as an opportunity for African and European leaders to lay down strategic guidelines to respond to a changing global context and give fresh impetus to the Africa-EU partnership;
- 1.3 welcome the particular attention given to the aspirations and concerns of young people in the future of Africa-EU relations and in the development of the two (2) continents, and call for regular cooperation with youth organisations and representatives, with a special focus on the needs of girls and young women;
- 1.4 consider it essential for economic and social stakeholders to make a structured, regular contribution to the EU-Africa strategy, and stress the need for them to take part in the proper platforms for addressing recommendations to political bodies;
- 1.5 call on the heads of state and government to take note of this desire and to provide the Network of Economic and Social Stakeholders with the proper resources to carry out this task;
- 1.6 point to the necessity and the value of involving the civil society of both continents in bringing about a fair and mutually beneficial partnership, fostering the economic and social development of both continents and disseminating a culture of participatory democracy;
- 1.7 call for the summit to help move the reflection and negotiations forwards with a view to renewing the partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries;

2. WITH REGARD TO THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE AND THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR TO TRANSFORM AFRICA:

- 2.1 recognise the key role of the agri-food sector in transforming Africa and call on the governments of the EU and Africa to speed up investment in rural infrastructure, strengthen farmers' capacities, provide them with access to social protection, ensure that they are consulted when agricultural policies are being devised and involved in the implementation thereof, not least as part of public-private partnerships, and the recognition of farmer status;
- 2.2 stress the need for proper management of land ownership and the phenomenon of land grabbing, together with a strategy to facilitate the creation and inclusive financing of agri-industrial parks and zones, innovation incubators and start-up accelerators;

- 2.3 call on governments to support small-scale farming and local and regional supply chains in the agricultural sector, provide for the establishment and dissemination of good practices and innovation at local level, prevent unfair competition, improve irrigation, storage, processing and transport infrastructure, promote marketing circuits for agricultural produce, and to react effectively to commodity price fluctuations on the international market;
 - 2.4 point out that the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 climate and energy framework call for farming models to be adopted which increase resilience and sustainability;
 - 2.5 support smart agriculture that pays particular attention to public research and local expertise;
 - 2.6 welcome the commitment made by the Ministers for Agriculture of the African Union and the European Union at the FAO in July 2017 to set up a coalition to finance the fight against food loss and waste, which should result in the creation of a food loss and waste fund, and call for additional measures to achieve consensus on the partnerships necessary to implement the 2014 African Union Malabo Declaration on reducing post-harvest losses;
 - 2.7 support the Adaptation of African Agriculture (AAA) initiative, launched at COP22, which aims to increase food security, mitigate food- and climate-related migration on the continent and improve farmers' incomes and make them more secure as part of an integrated, sustainable and inclusive framework. Consider, moreover, that this initiative represents a comprehensive and specific response to the major challenges facing African agriculture, particularly those relating to innovation, valorisation of the entire value chain, the responsible management of water resources, soil conservation and balance between ecosystems, as well as a forward-looking approach in terms of protecting against climate risks;
 - 2.8 call for specific vocational training programmes aimed at young farmers to be stepped up as part of integrated rural development policies, and for training and technology exchange programmes to be set up between young African and European farmers; stress the need for young farmers' organisations to be more involved in the agri-food sector with a view to increasing their skills;
3. ***WITH REGARD TO EDUCATION AND BOOSTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S SKILLS:***
- 3.1 point out that Africa is the continent with the youngest population; in this sense, the difficulties encountered by this major population group in the search for decent jobs are potential sources of social and political instability;
 - 3.2 welcome the importance attached to young people by the African Union in its 2017 theme: *Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth*, and in the joint Africa-EU communication, marking fresh impetus in the Africa-EU partnership, and call for the issue of youth employment to be included on a structural basis among the priorities for cooperation between Africa and Europe;
 - 3.3 support the Abidjan Declaration by the 4th Africa-Europe Youth Forum, and recommend that each state guarantee universal basic education, give priority to improving the vocational

training system and foster synergy between the education system and the labour market, particularly when it comes to drawing up curricula and anticipating needs;

- 3.4 stress that increasing young people's participation in business involves not just facilitating their access to financing for young people, but also supporting them in setting up small- and medium-sized enterprises and developing their self-employment possibilities;
- 3.5 call for the movement of young skilled workers to be allowed and for greater recognition and development of migrant workers' skills and qualifications, with a sustained approach that also factors in the social and economic development of the country or origin; recommend adopting policies and programmes that help fight potential brain drain and encourage skilled workers to return to and reintegrate into their country of origin;
- 3.6 recall the need to foster the principles and standards of decent work as well as the effective implementation of the ILO's fundamental Conventions;
- 3.7 urge the public authorities to define specific measures to support education and training of women;
- 3.8 encourage exchanges in the field of education between the European Union and Africa under the Erasmus + programme;

4. ***WITH REGARD TO STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN ECONOMIES:***

- 4.1 support a fair and even-handed transition to low carbon economies not only on the basis of the universally recognised principle of shared and differentiated responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions, but also out of respect for Africa's development needs;
- 4.2 insist that this transition should facilitate the development of businesses, create decent jobs, foster worker participation, help to incorporate an environmental dimension into qualifications and teaching curricula, promote sustainable, viable agriculture as well as trade in environmentally-friendly products and assess the social impact, on the constant basis of social dialogue;
- 4.3 call on the development partners to support the specific programmes encouraging this transition financially, continuing to work together with local authorities;
- 4.4 call for better access to financing for micro-enterprises, cooperatives, small traders and family businesses, and, in particular, businesses set up by women or young people, which have the greatest potential for growth and job creation in the African countries;
- 4.5 stress the key role of migrants as net contributors to economic, social and cultural development for both destination country and country of origin;
- 4.6 support all African Union and European Union measures fostering free movement of goods and persons and protection of workers' rights on the two continents.