AFRICA-EU: COLLABORATION FOR WIN-WIN NEGOTIATIONS IN MULTILATERAL FORA?

Responding jointly to global challenges: how can Africa and Europe achieve better impact

On 5 December 2013, some 50 Africa-EU stakeholders from African embassies, EU Member States, international organisations, research institutes, civil society and the private sector gathered in Brussels for the second lunch-time seminar on the future of Africa-EU relations organised by the European Commission. The goal was to freely debate on Africa-EU collaboration for win-win negotiations in multilateral fora. The seminar was opened by Françoise Moreau, Head of unit Africa EU Partnership at the European Commission. Ms Connie Hedegaard, EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), set the stage for innovative, frank and forward-looking discussions with their insightful keynote speeches. H.E. Mxolisi Nkosi, South African Ambassador to the EU, Dr. Alex Vines, Chatham House Research Director and Mr. José Manuel de Morais Briosa e Gala, Special Advisor to President Barroso on Africa and Development within G8 subsequently enriched the debate on how to build win-win alliances between the continents in multilateral negotiations.

The presentations and ensuing debates unanimously conveyed the enormous opportunities for Africa and Europe to join forces in order to effectively contribute to addressing global challenges. This potential was already recognised by African and EU Heads of State when they adopted the Joint Africa-EU Strategy in 2007. The last 5 years have delivered some progress but have also illustrated the substantial challenges which need to be tackled in order to pave the way for win-win coalitions between the two continents in multilateral negotiations.

Key messages...

The rich debate by the stakeholders on the main topic of the seminar conveyed the following key messages:

- **A strong Africa-EU Partnership is not an option, it is the only option:**
  
  Given the geographical proximity, Europe’s future need for migrants due to its demographic trend, Africa’s enormous assets in terms of natural resources and growing population, a strong political and well-functioning partnership between the two neighbouring continents is critical for their mutual prosperity;

- **Making coalitions for win-win negotiations in global fora requires high level political engagement:**
  
  Regular ministerial dialogues prior to international negotiations are necessary conditions for reaching win-win positions for the benefit of both continents;

- **Lead the way:**
  
  ‘Coalitions of the willing’ between peer groups of African and EU ministers and/or ‘JAES ambassadors’ can be practical mechanisms for reaching useful outcomes in global fora. Such progressive ‘core groups’ could be established in the area of climate change, Post-2015 Framework negotiations, Peace and Security as well as other areas of joint concern

(Continued on Page 4)
Need for a Stronger Africa-EU Partnership to Jointly Tackle Global Challenges

Faced with the profound changes of the international landscape and shifts in the international power configuration, a strong alliance between Africa and Europe is the only way for the two neighbouring continents to make headway in addressing global challenges. Put together, the weight of the two continents could break dead-locks that are currently hampering progress on many fronts, thereby laying conditions for more sustainable mutual prosperity. Common position and coordinated actions of Africa and Europe, including on financing requirements, in areas such as Climate Change can be decisive in obtaining binding commitments from all countries. Furthermore, the EU has considerable experience with clean technologies and renewable energies, such as solar energy, which should be shared with African partners.

Considering its vast natural resources, its growing markets, its young population and its potential for technology leaps, Africa offers solutions to many of the problems encountered by Europe to sustain its future trajectory. Moreover, against a backdrop of quasi-stagnation in most of Europe, there is a growing sentiment amongst the investment community that Africa is a market with high growth potential. Stakeholders generally recognised that the economic transformations taking place in Africa reinforce its capacity to take a more proactive role on the international scene. As such Africa has the potential of being a strong negotiation partner in multilateral organisations as long as it can unite around forward-looking continental positions. It was pointed out that there are not only African solutions to African problems but also global solutions to African problems.

More Political Dialogue Needed

There was a general view that Africa and Europe would make more progress if there was more political dialogue to strengthen trust and credibility, also in between the summits taking place every three years. It was argued that the annual Commission-to-Commission structure provides an appropriate framework for institutions of the two Unions to exchange views and deepen cooperation. An equivalent forum for African and European Member States was also proposed, in particular to address issues that require high-level political dialogue and guidance. In that regard, a suggestion was made to revive the Africa-EU Troika dialogue structure.
Finding common paths to advance

It was argued that the strong inter-linkages of issues being discussed in the various fora demanded a comprehensive mutual understanding between Africa and Europe. For example, the emerging priorities regarding climate change should not interfere with the importance of achieving the MDGs.

Some stakeholders highlighted the need for Africa and Europe to especially resolve pending ‘irritants’ which could impede the conduct of a smooth dialogue and win-win negotiations between the leaders of the two continents, such as concluding the negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements and developing a shared and modern understanding of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) principle.

With reference to Jean Jacques Rousseau’s idea of a social contract and to the fact that especially Africa is a repository of youth it was also recalled that issues such as climate change should be tackled in a spirit of inter-generational solidarity. In this sense, the post-2015 sustainable development goals will be a crucial framework for the harmonious relationship between humans and nature and solidarity with future generations.

Mechanisms to facilitate mobilisation of private equity

While acknowledging the importance of public funding to support actions required to achieve Africa-EU common goals, the stakeholders also underscored the huge potential in attracting private investment to further strengthen and accelerate the rate of response to global issues. It was noted that the EU has already started to operationalize blending instruments that facilitate leveraging of private funds into infrastructure projects in Africa, including those in green energy. Suggestions were made to further attract private investment for sustainable development in Africa. One possibility is to consider the use of public grants to establish investment guarantee schemes to mitigate risks.
...Key messages

- **The partnership must embrace the ‘new Africa’**: While the partnership objectives and principles should be preserved, the way in which the continents perceive each other require substantial changes. Africa is changing rapidly as reflected in the Vision 2063 process. Only jointly can Africa and the EU successfully influence the changing international power-constellations, as well as ensuring conditions for a sustainable and inclusive economic growth;

- **Africa and Europe need to address main irritants**: As for example, if Africa and Europe could reach a shared understanding of common but differentiated responsibilities, this would represent a significant step forward;

- **Africa should not only be seen as a continent particularly affected by problems, but also as part of the solution**: Africa presents enormous potential for renewable energies, new models of industrialisation and technological leapfrog;

- **Establish Investment guarantees and risk-sharing instruments to compete in the African market**: Public sector aid is in decline. Other sources must be leveraged including private equity and private sector investments as response to climate change and other global challenges;

- **Building more coherence in policy frameworks at the global level**: The EU could, for example, improve the effectiveness of its actions through further mainstreaming climate action into development policies;

- **Africa and Europe have a lot of common interests in international climate negotiations under the UNFCCC**: Africa’s development and finance needs shall be taken into account, but it is vital that all countries of the world enter into binding climate commitments at the UNFCCC Conference in Paris in December 2015. Given the importance of climate change for Africa, the topic should be prominently placed at the Leaders’ Summit and declaration in April 2014;

- **Strengthen Africa-EU consolidated action on climate change issues**: Africa and the EU should strengthen their coalition in climate change negotiations in order to overcome challenges related to setting international climate targets in 2015;

- **Opportunity to emphasize climate change at the next Africa-EU Summit**: Climate change should figure prominently on the agenda or be discussed by African and European Ministers dealing with climate change on the side-lines of the Summit.