



CONCEPT NOTE

Dedicated Fridays of the Commission on Africa – EU Dialogue

First session: Jointly organized by the African Union Commission and ECDPM

Making EU-Africa Relations Future-proof

‘Build up towards the Africa-Europe Summit in April 2014’

Background

Meeting in Lisbon in 2007, European and African leaders resolved to “build a new strategic political partnership for the future, overcoming the traditional donor-recipient relationship and building on common values and goals”.¹ Such commitment was made against the backdrop of changing geopolitical, institutional and economic contexts in both Europe and Africa. In an attempt to give life to such ambition, they launched a new partnership framework, the Joint EU-Africa Strategy (JAES), which was implemented through successive Action Plans along the lines of eight thematic partnerships.

Six years after Lisbon, the assessment on whether the seeds for a ‘new strategic political partnership’ have been planted is mixed at best. The EU has repeatedly argued for a stronger focus on ‘shared priorities’ and results while for African actors, there is a sense that ‘more needs to be done’ to forge a truly new partnership based on shared principles and values. Furthermore, the new framework, as embodied in the JAES, continued to co-exist with other frameworks such as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement as well as thematic dialogue forums around specific issues such as peace and security making it difficult to enforce a new approach using traditional development cooperation tools.

The context of the partnership has evolved further since 2007 making it even more urgent for both partners to clearly define the added value of their partnership at a time when their needs and interests are shifting and their international relations are under pressure to support the domestic agendas of their multiple stakeholders. Looking forward, the question is how EU-Africa relations could be adjusted to ensure that it meets the future needs of African and European partners making it a relevant partnership for both continents.

The EU-Africa Summit in Spring 2014 provides an opportunity to look back at the successes and failures of the attempts to launch a strategic partnership, to revisit some strategic questions on the nature of the partnership and to have an open debate on what both partners expect of one another in order to inform the focus of the relationship beyond 2014.

In the run up to the EU-Africa Summit, due to be held in Brussels in April 2014, the African Union Commission (AUC) jointly with the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) organise a one-day meeting which is aimed at providing an **informal platform** for policy makers to exchange on some of the strategic questions around the future of the EU-Africa partnership in order to feed reflections in the run up to the EU-Africa Summit and beyond.

More specifically, the meeting will focus on the following questions:

¹ Lisbon Declaration, June 2008, pg 9-10



1. What **progress, tangible and intangible**, has been achieved in EU-Africa relations since 2000 and especially after the Lisbon Summit in 2007?
2. How to smoothen **dialogue** on contentious issues, such as the ICC?
3. What are the **new and persisting challenges** in the partnership between the EU and Africa?
4. What should be the **key elements that would ensure the relevance of the partnership in future**?

An **information fair** at the side of the meeting will also be organised to expose the participants to the different activities around Africa-EU relations.

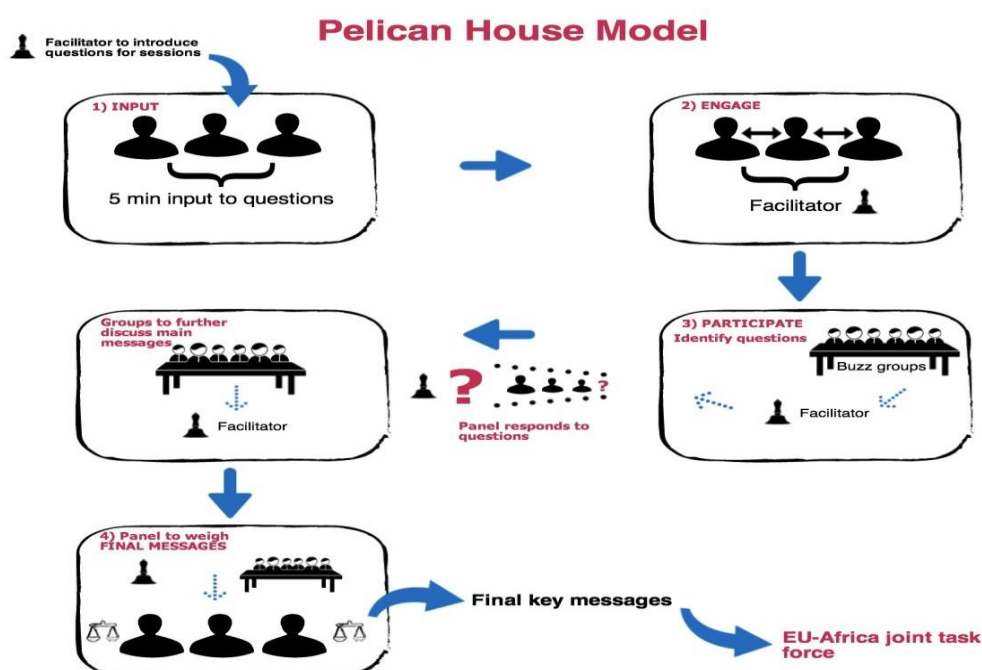
Objectives

The following are the key objectives of the meeting:

- Provide an informal platform of dialogue between African and European actors on progress around the partnership, as well as identifying enabling and blocking factors shaping it
- Provide an informal platform of dialogue on key priorities of EU-Africa relations that would contribute to a future-proof partnership
- Contribute to the debate on increasing the relevance of the EU-Africa partnership

Approach

This first in the series one-day meeting, will use the platform provided by the Fridays of the Commission. It will be informal, interactive in nature and focused on stimulating debate rather than use a presentation and questions/answer sessions. The meeting will include both Africa and European representatives and will be conducted along the line of the methodology below:





Participants

The meeting will bring together relevant African and European participants.

African participants will include:

- Representatives of different departments of the African Union Commission
- Representative of the Pan-African Parliament delegation on relations with the European Parliament
- Representative from the NPCA
- Representatives of Regional Economic Communities
- Representative of the African Development Bank
- African member states representatives
- Representative of the Economic Commission for Africa and other UN Agencies based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- African researchers and academics involved in EU-Africa relations including members of the Europe-Africa Research Network that was established in Lisbon in 2007
- Students/academia from the University of Ethiopia and other higher institutions based in Addis Ababa
- Civil Society Organizations based in Addis Ababa

European participants can include, among others:

- Representatives of DEVCO
- Representatives of the EEAS
- Representative of the European Parliament delegation on relations with the PAP
- Representative of European member states based in Brussels or Addis

Proposed Outputs

The outcomes will be published in the "Bulletin of the Friday of the Commission" and disseminated to a wide audience for publicity including AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities, Universities and Development Partners among others..

Proposed program

Time	Session
9:30-9h45	<i>Welcome remarks by the Chair of the African Union Commission</i>
9h45-11h00	<p>Retrospective: EU-Africa relations in the last 10 years and the state of play of the JAES</p> <p>This session aims to enrich the debate on the state of play of the partnership since the Cairo Summit with more insights from within Africa. From here the key opportunities that the partnership presents as well as the challenges will be identified.</p> <p><i>Key questions will include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How has the partnership evolved since the Cairo Summit of 2000 and especially after the Lisbon meeting since 2007?</i> - <i>What are the areas where the partnership has contributed positively?</i> - <i>What challenges continue to face the partnership?</i> - <i>Is the JAES a good framework to enhance the partnership?</i>



11h00 – 12h30	<p>Improving political dialogue to address contentious issues: The case of the International Criminal Court (ICC)</p> <p>This session will reflect on improving political dialogue on contentious issues, taking the recent tension around the ICC as an example. The choice of the topic is informed by its importance to African participants, which is demonstrated notably by the fact that a special summit was organized to discuss the African position, but also due to its relevance to the EU-Africa partnership notably within the framework of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement's Article 11.</p> <p><i>Key Questions will include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the African and the European understanding regarding the ICC issue - How to ensure there is a constructive dialogue on issues that are dealt with outside of the structures of the JAES but which may have an impact on political dialogue between Africa and Europe? - Are there any lessons to be drawn on how dialogue could be improved around contentious issues such as the ICC on the basis of recent experience (beyond the Kenya case)? What middle ground?
12h30-14h00	Lunch
14h00- 16h00	<p>Making EU-Africa relations future-proof</p> <p><i>This session will build on the previous two sessions and will aim to identify some key messages to guide the partnership beyond the 2014-Summit.</i></p> <p><i>Key Questions include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the areas for immediate attention and how can they be addressed? - What should be the essence of the partnership? Areas of focus? - What should the next 4 years of the partnership seek to achieve? <p><i>Outcome of the previous session will be presented and discussants will be asked to debate them further to arrive to key recommendations</i></p>
16h00- 18h00	Official visit of information fair desks and reception

Proposed date and venue

Friday, 28 February 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The event will be co-financed by ECDPM, the African Union Commission and the JAES Support Mechanism.

For more information

For more information please feel free to contact Mwila Kamwela, African Union Commission (Kamwelam@africa-union.org) or Faten Aggad, Program Manager Africa's Change Dynamics (fa@ecdpm.org)