OVERVIEW OF THE AU – EU PARTNERSHIP

2ND AU – EU MINISTERIAL MEETING – KIGALI 25-26 OCTOBER 2021

Background

1. The African Union-European Union (AU-EU) partnership was launched during the 1st Africa-Europe Summit held in Cairo, Egypt, in 2000. The political Declaration adopted at the first Africa – Europe Summit laid the foundation for the Africa – Europe Partnership by highlighting that:” *In order to give a new strategic dimension to the global partnership between Africa and Europe for the Twenty First Century, in a spirit of equality, respect, alliance and co-operation between our regions, We are committed to the basic objective of strengthening the already existing links of political, economic and cultural understanding through the creation of an environment and an effective framework for promoting a constructive dialogue on economic, political, social and development issues*."

2. After the 1st Summit in Cairo, which formalized the Africa – Europe Partnership, it took seven (7) years for both sides to articulate the strategic direction of the Partnership through the adoption in 2007, during the 2nd Africa – Europe Summit, Organized in Lisbon, Portugal, of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). The JAES underlines that the four main objectives of the Africa – Europe strategic partnership are as follows:

(i) To reinforce and elevate the Africa-EU political partnership to address issues of common concern. This includes strengthening of institutional ties and addressing common challenges, in particular peace and security, migration and development, and a clean environment. To this end, both sides will treat Africa as one and upgrade the Africa-EU political dialogue to enable a strong and sustainable continent-to-continent partnership, with the AU and the EU at the centre.

(ii) To strengthen and promote peace, security, democratic governance and human rights, fundamental freedoms, gender equality, sustainable economic development, including industrialization, and regional and continental integration in Africa, and to ensure that all the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals are met in all African countries.

(iii) To jointly promote and sustain a system of effective multilateralism, with strong, representative and legitimate institutions, and the reform of the United Nations (UN) system and of other key international institutions, and to address global challenges and common concerns such as human rights, including children’s rights and gender equality, fair trade, migration, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other pandemics, climate change, energy security and sustainability, terrorism, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the illicit trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, and knowledge-based society issues such as ICT, science, technology and innovation.
(iv) To facilitate and promote a broad-based and wide-ranging people centred partnership, Africa and the EU will empower non-state actors\(^1\) and create conditions to enable them to play an active role in development, democracy building, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction processes. Both sides will also promote holistic approaches to development processes, and make this Joint Strategy a permanent platform for information, participation and mobilization of a broad spectrum of civil society actors in the EU, Africa and beyond. Ongoing dialogue with civil society, the private sector and local stakeholders on issues covered by this Joint Strategy will be a key component to ensure its implementation.

3. The Joint Africa – Europe Strategy established a three-year cycle for the holding, alternatively in Africa and Europe, of the Heads of States and Government Summits, which is the highest level of engagement and provide strategic orientation and guidance to the Partnership. Within this context, The 3\(^{rd}\) Africa-Europe Summit took place in Tripoli, Libya, in November 2010, the 4\(^{th}\) Africa-Europe Summit in Brussels, Belgium, in April 2014, and the 5\(^{th}\) Summit, which was held in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, on 29 – 30 November 2017. At the last Summit held in Abidjan in 2017, both sides agreed to change the name of their partnership to African Union – European Union (AU – EU) partnership and to strengthen the follow-up mechanism of the partnership by establishing an annual AU – EU Ministerial Meeting to monitor and review the commitments made during the Summits.

4. Furthermore, the African Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of States and Government Decision No.: Ext/Assembly/AU/Dec.4(XI), of November 2018, adopted a dual approach to Africa’s engagements with the EU for post-2020: A Continent-to-Continent framework under the AU framework (Referred to as the AU – EU Partnership) and the post-Cotonou framework under the ACP group.

**Objectives of the 2\(^{nd}\) AU-EU Ministerial Meeting**

5. The 2\(^{nd}\) AU – EU Ministerial Meeting to be held in Kigali, Rwanda, on 26 October 2021, and preceded by a Joint AU –EU Senior Officials’ Meeting, which will take place on 25 October 2021, to prepare for Ministers deliberations, will take stock of progress made in Africa and Europe regarding the four priority areas adopted during the last AU – EU Summit held in 2017, in Abidjan, as follows:

   (i) Investing in people – education, science, technology and skills development;
   (ii) Strengthening Resilience, Peace, Security and Governance;
   (iii) Migration and Mobility; and
   (iv) Mobilising Investments for African structural sustainable transformation;

6. At the end of the Ministerial Meeting on Tuesday 26 October 2021, Ministers will adopt a Communiqué highlighting the outcomes of their deliberations and the main issues discussed under the four priority areas as indicated above.
Expected outcomes

7. The 2nd AU – EU Ministerial Meeting is taking place in a particularly challenging global context marked by the Covid-19 Pandemic and its negative consequences on all aspects of human societies.

8. Since this is the first time, AU and EU Ministers are meeting following the Covid-19 pandemic, it is envisaged that most of the debates will evolve around the fight against Covoid-19, vaccines acquisition for all in an equitable manner, and the focus will also be directed around policies and concrete measures to be implemented to ensure a swift economic recovery and restore confidence in trade, tourism and people – to – people exchanges.

9. Concerning the first area of cooperation, which is “Investing in people – education, science, technology and skills development”, Ministers will particularly stress on the importance to innovate taking into consideration the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic and renew commitments to support quality distance and online education platforms. In this regard, they will consider enhancing cooperation to reduce the digital divide between developed and developing countries, to ensure affordable access to energy as well as to information and communication technologies.

10. On strengthening Resilience, Peace, Security and Governance, Ministers will particularly emphasize on the importance to ensure vaccine acquisition and availability for all. They will therefore agree on the necessity to fast track the production of Covid-19 vaccines in Africa. In this regard, AU will request the support of EU to facilitate the rapid deployment of vaccine production centers in some African countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and others. In addition, cooperation and support to joint initiatives against terrorism and violent extremism; human, wildlife and drug trafficking; piracy; and all forms of transnational organised crime and cybercrime, will be reviewed with concrete recommendations. It is envisaged that the situation in the Sahel regions, the horn of Africa and in the Lake Chad basin will be given high attention as well the financing modalities of AU led Peace Support operations. Issues of environment and Climate change and the future of our planet will be debated.

11. Concerning migration and mobility, Ministers will consult and propose recommendations to reinforce the AU-EU migration dialogue framework on addressing irregular migration; trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants; return, readmission and reintegration.

12. With respect to “Mobilising Investments for African structural sustainable transformation” the main focus will be on economic recovery from the unprecedented negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and concrete measures to reduce the Covid-19 impact on economic growth, trade, agriculture, employment, tourism industry, inflation, and on external sources of finance as well as on debt relief for African countries. Ministers will also make proposal on the existing possibilities to mobilise resources for priority actions.
to invest in strengthening health systems, support vulnerable populations, support economic stimulus programmes and mobilisation of private and public investments in sectors with high multiplier effect for economic recovery and job creation; in addition to long-term financing to build resilient, inclusive and sustainable development to mitigate future crisis’ effects.

Perspective

13. In the lead up to the 6th AU – EU Summit, which will be held in 2022, in Europe, Ministers will discuss possible future areas of cooperation. In March 2020, the European Commission published its “Strategy with Africa” and identified five pillars for cooperation, which the EU envisions as pillars for a future cooperation framework, as follows: (i). Green Transition and Energy access; (ii). Digital Transformation; (iii). Sustainable growth and jobs; (iv). Peace, security and governance; and (v). Migration and mobility.

14. However, from the AU perspective, while the areas related to Sustainable growth and jobs, peace, security and governance and Migration and mobility are traditional areas of cooperation for which both sides have defined priorities and positions, others require further reflection and a cautious move on the part of African leaders notably on the green transition and digital transformation.

15. With respect to the green transition, the EU proposes the use of its European Green Deal as a framework for cooperation. However, this proposal will be questioned by the AU, which estimates that there is a high risk of engaging with an undefined process (the discussion on the green deal in the EU itself is still ongoing). Moreover, the multilateral framework of Paris, where African countries participated in the crafting of the agreement, is a preferred framework considering its commitment to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

16. Concerning the digital transformation agenda, it is important to note that both the AU and the EU have different approaches and priorities. For the AU, its understanding of Africa’s digital transformation is to drive the industrialization of the continent, foster the digital economy and support the African Continental Free Trade Area.