

# Africa - EU Civil Society Forum

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This project is co-funded by the African and the European Unions

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

### Africa-EU Forum highlights role of CSOs as independent actors within the JAES

TUNIS, 13 July 2017 - Representatives of civil society organisations from Africa and Europe have stressed the importance of fostering a space for participation by civil society organisations on both continents as independent actors and integral partners within the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), and have called upon Heads of State and Government, and African and European institutions to increase their support for a timely, transparent and inclusive involvement of CSOs at all levels of decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the JAES, ahead of the upcoming 5<sup>th</sup> Africa-EU Summit, in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) on 28 and 29 November 2017

Meeting at the **Africa-EU Civil Society Forum** in Tunis on 11-13 July, the African and European CSOs issued a declaration calling upon institutions and leaders in both Africa and Europe to act upon political commitments to create a true enabling environment for civil society participation. The declaration also contained a series of recommendations to be taken in 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.

Speaking on behalf of the EU CSO Steering Committee, Agustín Martín (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung) said that the Forum emphasised that African and European civil society organisations had the right to work and collaborate freely, critically and independently to influence, implement and make accountable the decisions of the Africa-EU Partnership, as acknowledged by the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. “Our gathering is the culmination of a long and fruitful dialogue between diverse civil society actors that, despite challenges, has resulted in a common final declaration that should guide our advocacy efforts in the run up to the 5th Africa-EU Summit. In this regard, we demand that civil society is given a meaningful space during the Summit. 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.”

“The space given to civil society is an integral part of the Africa-EU strategic partnership process that has been institutionalised and is guaranteed to continue,” African Steering Committee Chair Abozer Elmana Elligai said, explaining that “the outcomes of the Tunis Forum constitute an important portion of the preparation for the upcoming Africa-EU Summit of November 2017, where the representatives of civil society will have their seat at the table and will submit its inputs directly to the political leaders of the Africa-Europe Summit.”

The **Africa-EU Civil Society Forum**, a gathering of African and European Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) took place on 11-13 June in Tunis. This Forum, the third of its kind, was organised in the framework of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), and supported by the African

Union's Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU/CIDO) and the European Union (EU). The forum brought together civil society organizations from both continents to discuss future priorities in light of external challenges and opportunities at global and regional levels.

**Context:**

**The First Africa-EU Intercontinental CSO Forum took place in Cairo, Egypt, in November 2010.** The participants adopted several recommendations covering most of the partnerships. The final declaration contains recommendations to improve and enhance the delivery of the Strategy in response to the development needs of people, including on: diaspora development, job creation; value addition in agriculture, technology, industry, mineral and raw material production; affordable access to energy for all; rural infrastructure; fair trade; rights of migrants; expeditious and reciprocal visa processes; women's rights and empowerment; youth involvement; climate debt; decent work; affordable access to energy for all; civilian involvement in conflict prevention and resolution; getting on track on the MDGs in particular in areas such as health, education, reducing maternal and child mortality, water and sanitation. Civil society also denounces xenophobia, extremism, terrorism and violence in all its forms.

**On 23-25 October 2013, African and European civil society organisations met at the Second Africa-EU Civil Society Forum in Brussels, Belgium, ahead of the Africa-EU Summit of April 2014.** Representatives of 32 African and 36 EU civil society organisations (CSO) participated in the forum and the deliberations delivered a Communiqué, a Declaration on the JAES and Next steps or follow-up actions by the JSC. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum took place against the backdrop of mutual dissatisfaction in both Africa and the EU with the results achieved so far in the implementation of the JAES since its adoption in 2007. In the light of the changing economic contexts of Africa and the EU, coupled with difficulties in resolving through political dialogue issues of, amongst other things, trade and mutually beneficial development, governments of both the EU and the AU have called for a reform of the JAES to be discussed and adopted at the Summit in April 2014.

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For general information about the Forum and the Africa-EU Partnership, visit <http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/>

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