

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: 000/2024

Date: 23rd July 2024

Venue: Brussels, Belgium

African Media Fellows Get Inside Look at the EU: Elections, Institutions, and Africa Relations

The African Union (AU) Media Fellows recently embarked on an immersive study tour to Brussels, Belgium from 9th -15th June,2024 aimed at equipping a new generation of African storytellers with a deeper understanding of the European Union (EU) and its



relationship with Africa Union. The Fellows visited key institutions like the European Commission, Parliament, and External Action Service (EEAS). They even observed the recently concluded EU elections, gaining valuable insights into the EU's political landscape, foreign policy with Africa, and the role of media in shaping public discourse.

This EU study tour was organized by the EU delegation to the AU in collaboration with the AU Information and Communication Directorate (ICD) with the goal to build bridges between African and European media, fostering a more nuanced understanding of each other's realities. The AU Media Fellowship (AUMF) program empowers journalists to become champions for informed dialogue and collaboration, ultimately shaping a more positive and productive narrative around the [AU-EU partnership](#).

"Initiatives like the [AU Media Fellowship](#) are fostering a new generation of storytellers equipped to drive positive change across the continent", said **Leslie Richer, AU Director of Information & Communication as she emphasized the program's significance**. She also highlighted the fellowships ability to develop storytellers who can illuminate shared achievements and advocate for a brighter, more equitable future." Echoing the sentiments expressed by the director, **Nicola Bellomo**, Head of division, European External Action Service and **Mark Gray**, Head of Unit for Political Strategy and Communication at EU international partnerships. They stressed the importance of a strong media in fostering understanding, transparency, and cooperation – all crucial elements for achieving **Agenda 2063, the AU's vision for Africa's transformation and the Global Gateway initiative**.

At the European Commission, the AU Media Fellows delved into the EU's approach to development cooperation with Africa. Their discussions with key officials, including Petr Mooz, Senior Expert at the Directorate-General for Budget, and Lora Borissova, member

of the Cabinet of the European Commissioner for International Partnerships, focused on understanding the role of EU institutions in decision-making, current initiatives and future plans, and most critically, the role of media in holding international organizations like the EU and the AU accountable for its commitments to the citizens.

To understand the EU's Foreign Policy, AU media fellow engaged with Domenico Rosa, Head of Unit for Strategic Partnerships with Africa and with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) at the department for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), and Asad Beg, Senior Expert at the EEAS Pan-African Affairs Division to understand the EU's approach to diplomacy, security, and its strategic partnership with the African Union. This offered the fellows valuable context for their reporting on AU- EU relations, in light of the **upcoming AU- EU Ministerial and heads of state summit**.

The highlight of the Study tour to Brussels was undoubtedly observing the **European Parliament elections**. This allowed the AU Media Fellows to witness citizens across Europe casting their votes, gaining insights into the EU's democratic structures, along with the challenges and opportunities it faces. Additionally, they were able to identify differences between the EU's structures and voting processes and those of the African Union. This experience is particularly pertinent ahead of the **AU Commission elections in 2025**. Coinciding with the elections, they had the distinct privilege of interviewing **Ms. Patience Chiradza, the African Union's Director of Governance and Conflict Prevention**. The encounter served to highlight the shared goals of the AU and EU in fostering democracy, good governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, all of which form the foundation of their ongoing partnership. This interview took place during the [African Union Peer-to-Peer Mission \(PTPM\)](#) convened at the margins of the European Parliament Elections.

Further enriching their experience, the AU Media Fellows embarked on an engaging tour of the Parliament's media facilities. They explored the Parliament Museum, press room, press conference room, and audio-visual facilities, getting a unique behind-the-scenes look at the workings of parliamentary press operations. During the tour, they received a thorough briefing on AU-EU relations from Jesper Haglund, Head of Unit, and policy advisors Ulrich Karock and Hana Sedlackova. This presentation shed light on the importance of this partnership. The was followed by insightful discussions on democracy support, thanks to Adriana Buchiu and Gonzalo Urbina Trevino, who highlighted the European Parliament's commitment to the Pan-African Parliament.



After their learning tour of the Pan-African Parliament in South Africa last year, the AU Media Fellows were eager to understand the collaboration and coordination between the EU Parliament and Pan-African Parliament. To learn more, they met with Mr. Oumar Doumbouya, Director for External Offices in the EU's Directorate for Parliamentary

Democracy Partnerships. He shared insights on the joint efforts these parliaments are making to improve the lives of citizens across both Africa and Europe, fostering positive change on both continents.

"This EU learning study tour was an eye-opening experience," said Jibi Maring (South Sudan), an AU Media Fellow from South Sudan. "Witnessing the EU elections firsthand provided a unique perspective on European democracy and its inner workings. The briefings and discussions with EU representatives, particularly the one with Oumar Doumbouya on EU-AU parliamentary collaboration, were incredibly insightful. I believe the shared goals of promoting democracy, good governance, and human rights identified during this trip offer a strong foundation for even stronger ties between the AU and EU. I'm confident this knowledge exchange will empower us as AU media fellows to contribute to a more informed and collaborative future for both continents."

The week-long study tour at the EU concluded with a thought-provoking visit to the Africa Museum in Brussels. During this visit, the fellows engaged in a one-on-one session with the Director-General, Bart Ouvry, to learn about the museum's ongoing efforts to present a more balanced and nuanced narrative of Africa's relationship with Europe.

The African Union Media Fellowship Programme (AUMF) [comprises of 20 journalists and content creators from across Africa](#), with backgrounds in audio-visual, print, and digital journalism. This flagship AU- ICD initiative aims to transform African media by fostering ethical journalism, challenging prevailing narratives, and promoting collaboration among media professionals for cross-border coverage. The programme also engages policymakers to enhance media influence and impact.

For further media inquiries, please contact:

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