



## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Joint AU-EU Statement  
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### The African Union Welcomes Launch of €19.9 Million African-European Museum Partnership with The European Union

#### JOINT PRESS RELEASE

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, 28 April 2026

In partnership with The African Union, the launch of the African-European Museum Partnership (AEMP) was welcomed today at Headquarters. The €19.9 million initiative supported by the The European Union and its Member States - Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

The programme advances the people-to-people dimension of the AU-EU Partnership and opens a new chapter in equitable cultural collaboration, heritage preservation, and the sustainable development of African and European museums, in line with Agenda 2063 Aspiration 5 on a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values, and ethics.

Based on the milestone Dakar Declaration on African-Museum Partnership of 2023, this partnership is driven by the vision of leading museum professionals from the two neighbouring continents to intensify cooperation within Africa and between Africa and Europe. The initiative targets African and European museums, culture professionals, and training organisations, with benefits extending to youth, local communities, artists, and public and private sectors' actors.

The launch ceremony took place today at the AU Headquarters allowing for an inspired exchange with high-level dignitaries, ambassadors, and leading museum directors from both EU and Africa, namely AUC Acting Director for Social Development, Culture and Sports, **Dr. Angela Martins**, *Chargée d'Affaires a.i.* of the EU Delegation to the AU, **Karin B. Stanghed**, representatives of Member States, directors from African and European museums, the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Kinshasa, École du Patrimoine Africain (EPA), ICOM Africa, and UNESCO.

At her welcome remarks, AUC Ag Director **Angela Martins** highlighted: *"Today, we witness the fruition of a pan-African ambition for cultural sovereignty and international collaboration. The African Union proudly stands behind this partnership, which empowers our institutions, professionals, and youth to claim their rightful place in shaping the global cultural landscape."*

The formal launch of the AEMP was announced by EU *Chargée d'affaires* **Karin B. Stanghed**, emphasising how *"it is extraordinary to launch the African-European Museum Partnership that will transform the shared ambition of African and European museum directors into actionable progress; as it will protect heritage, promote cultural dialogue, engage youth, and foster sustainable growth through culture"*.

On her welcome speech, **Dewi van de Weerd**, Ambassador for International Cultural Cooperation of the Netherlands, representing the co-financing **Team Europe** Member States - Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, underlined: *“We really hope that this initiative will stand out as a best practice of cooperation on the basis of expertise and equality, strengthening networks and exchange between museums and makers.”*

*“This partnership is not a one-way street; it is a bustling, multi-lane highway of exchange,”* said **Prof. Hamady Bocoum**, former Director of the Museum of Black Civilisations in Dakar (Senegal) and one of the initiators of the partnership, in his keynote speech. *“We are dismantling old paradigms and building a new, equitable framework where African expertise and perspectives are not just included but are leading the conversation on our shared cultural patrimony.”*

His co-speaker **Dr Guido Gryseels**, former Director General of the AfricaMuseum in Tervuren (Belgium) added: *“Museums are not just repositories of the past; they are active laboratories for the future. By combining African and European collections, knowledge, and creativity, we can develop new narratives that resonate with global audiences.”*

It all started at the opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin in 2022 among a group of African and European museum directors who shared the assessment that too few formats existed for museums to interact, share knowledge, and set up partnerships that transcend bilateral cooperation. This culminated in April 2023, when sixty museum directors from twenty-eight African and twelve European countries gathered at an international forum in Dakar. There, they expressed a shared ambition in the Dakar Declaration on African European Museum Cooperation to strengthen partnerships, paving the way for this initiative.

The AEMP aims for two core goals: to strengthen AU -EU and intra-Africa cultural cooperation, enhancing intercultural dialogue and diversity; and to protect and promote African cultural heritage as a vector for social cohesion, stability, cultural tourism, jobs, and sustainable growth. Its activities are structured around three pillars: Exhibitions, Collections, and Empowerment. The €19.9 million cultural initiative financed by the European Commission, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, in collaboration with the AU Commission will be implemented by both the Goethe-Institut and Expertise France. Italy contributes through a parallel project: “African-Italian Museum Partnerships”, a €4 million initiative implemented by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) at the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Uganda.

A core innovation of the AEMP is its governance, designed to ensure a genuine Team Africa-Europe approach. An **African-European Strategic Steer** will validate its overall policy and strategic orientations, comprised by representatives from the AU Commission, the European Commission, and contributing EU member states. AU Member States from the AU Specialised Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports will join to reach equal representation. Besides, an **African-European Advisory Board** will include members of the Committee of Museum Directors, created to follow up on the Dakar Declaration, African training institutions, and representatives of bodies like UNESCO and ICOM Africa.

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**Note to Editors:** High-resolution images, video b-roll from the launch event, and additional information are available upon request.

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