

Report

Informal High-level Seminar

Beyond the 2014 Summit: Which Way Forward for EU-Africa Relations?

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Key Messages

The 2014 4th Africa-EU summit was marked by moderate optimism on both sides of the partnership.

The summit emphasised the strategic and interest-driven nature of the partnership by focussing primarily on the peace and security and economic components of the partnership contributing to the perception of a constructive and more open summit.

The roadmap and general summit declaration "Investing in People, Prosperity and Peace" will now guide the implementation of the partnership until 2017 when the next summit will be organised in Africa.

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The Summit rhetoric moved away from a development mind-set to a trade and investment mind-set."

Introduction

On 9 May 2014, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) convened an Informal High-Level Seminar to assess the results of the 4th EU-Africa summit in Brussels (2-3 April 2014) and to discuss the implications for the future of the partnership. The seminar brought together senior African and EU officials, ECDPM institutional partners, members of the ECDPM Board of Governors and ECDPM Staff.

ECDPM invited five speakers to share their reflections on the summit:

- **Mr. Fernando Frutuoso de Melo**, Director general DEVCO, European Commission
- **H.E. Ambassador Jagdish Dharamchand Koonjul**, Ambassador of Mauritius to the European Union
- **H.E. Ambassador Maria Mascarenhas**, Ambassador of Cape Verde to the European Union
- **H.E. Ambassador Mxolisi Sizo Nkosi**, Ambassador of South-Africa to the European Union
- **Mr. Hans-Peter Schadek**, EU-Africa Summit Envoy, Pan-African Affairs Division, European External Action Service (EEAS)

The ensuing discussion was structured around three broad sets of questions:

1. *How can we assess the process and the outcomes of the summit? What was the quality of the dialogue? What concrete results have been achieved?*
2. *What are the key challenges for the future of the EU-Africa Partnership from*

the 2014 summit up to the next summit in 2017? How can we ensure effective implementation of the roadmap? What should be done now to build a "partnership of equals" based on real common interests between both continents?

3. *How did the EU and AU institutions manage the preparatory process and the summit itself? Who assumed leadership of the process during the summit and who will do so afterwards? How did the new EU institutional setup with the European External Action Service perform its role?*

This seminar was held under the Chatham House rule inviting participants to speak in their personal capacity and opening the floor to frank discussions.

This concise report provides an overview of the key points that were raised during the seminar by the various speakers and participants without revealing their identity nor their institutional affiliation.

1. The Summit Process: Towards a normalisation of the EU-Africa relations?

[From polarisation towards a constructive atmosphere](#). The summit preparations were marked by *fears that longstanding controversies would turn the event into a "clash between continents"*. Diverging perspectives on issues such as the EPA negotiations, the International Criminal Court (ICC), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Rights (LGBTI) and threats from certain heads of state to boycott the event added to the pre-summit unease on both sides. In the end, however, the summit *was well attended by some 60 heads of state and government from both sides of the Mediterranean*. The longstanding contentious issues

and “irritants” did not negatively impact on the summit’s overall atmosphere.

Diplomacy behind closed doors seems to have worked. The unresolved, more sensitive dossiers seem to have been dealt – sometimes through last minute meetings, in the summit corridors or numerous bilateral meetings and discussions. Leaders from both continents “agreed to disagree” but nobody seemed to be willing to “spoil the party”. There is a huge challenge not to ignore the controversial issues in the follow-up to the summit. Political solutions should be found on the looming EPA negotiating deadline of October 2014, on the ICC, and on the LGBTI dossier in EU-Africa and bilateral relations. It was also stressed that there is an urgent need for both the EU and Africa to speed up reflections on the future of EU-ACP relations’ post-2020 when the Cotonou Agreement expires.

Towards a more “business-like” attitude. On the EU side, the summit was characterised by more humility and a markedly less normative approach. African representatives in turn were seen to be more assertive, but also less ideologically driven. It was felt that dialogue which fundamentally breaks with the patronising attitudes and unilateral dependency syndrome of the past will nurture a new type of partnership based on a real *interdependence of both continents*. Issues such as climate change, energy, and unemployment affect both continents and demand more intensive cooperation to reach common solutions. This is a significant change of focus from previous summits which were largely dominated by aid and development issues.

2. The Summit outcomes: Newfound realism or missed opportunities?

From intentions to implementation? A roadmap and a summit declaration under the theme “Investing in People, Prosperity and Peace” will now guide the implementation of the partnership until 2017. While the Declaration sets the political tone, the Roadmap outlines strategic priorities that now have to be implemented. Only one specific declaration on Migration and Mobility out of four proposed was eventually adopted. The Heads of State did not adopt three other declarations on food security, climate change and the Post 2015 agenda. This was quite surprising as chief negotiators on both sides saw migration and mobility as one of the major areas of divergence. However, it does not necessarily indicate that there were major divergences on the three other declarations. A lack of preparation time to dully discuss these declarations might have been the main reason for the failure to adopt these declarations. Some participants felt that this was a rather positive sign of the ‘normalisation’ of the relationship, with the African side becoming more assertive and unwilling to “rubber stamp” declarations that were “pre-cooked” by the European side, as has sometimes been the case in the past.

More focus and a prioritisation of the partnership. The 8 partnerships of the JAES were reduced to 5 major clusters in the roadmap covering the period 2014-2017. These include: (1) Peace and Security, (2) Democracy, Good Governance and Human Rights, (3) Human Development, (4) Sustainable and Inclusive Development and Growth and (5) Continental Integration and Global and Emerging Issues. These areas are still quite broad and it is not clear whether this will bring more focus compared to the 8 JAES partnerships. Participants discerned some key areas of cooperation of

“We are at a critical point in time. It is now necessary to pick up the momentum”

which the first remains the well-established partnership on Peace and Security. Crucial topics highlighted in the ECDPM seminar were migration, economic growth and jobs, investment, industrialisation, agricultural development, climate change and the transparent management of national resources.

“New realism” or “missed opportunities”? While the Summit’s *main focus was on peace and security and sustainable economic development there was relatively little talk about democracy, human rights and governance*. Participants interpreted this limited focus on the more delicate political issues rather as a sign of a *“new realism”*. Africa-EU relations seem to find most common ground in key areas of cooperation such as peace and security but also in *areas that increasingly bear witness to a partnership of equals*, such as economic interests. Fears were expressed by some that the summit could be a “missed opportunity” by overly focusing on these economic issues in the partnership and avoiding discussion on the sensitive political issues. However, it was felt that both the declaration and the new roadmap make ample reference to the governance, democracy and human rights agenda and that these essential elements in the partnership will not be downgraded in the hierarchy of priorities.

3. A Partnership between equals: Challenges ahead

Towards a partnership based on interests that goes beyond aid. The summit was described by several participants as a *paradigm shift in the relationship between the EU and Africa*. This shift from the traditional donor-recipient relationship to an approach based on mutual interests is a clear illustration of a change in mentalities and attitudes. With the reform of the EU’s external action, the EU has also become more open about its own strategic interests in

Africa including areas like natural resources, peace and security and trade. African participants stressed that there is nothing wrong with the EU articulating more clearly its real interests and in further investing in what AUC Chairperson Dlamini-Zuma called *“complementary comparative advantages”* between both continents - this includes areas where the EU could possibly “outperform” other partners of Africa.

Keeping up the momentum. The political declaration of a constructive summit creates huge expectations for change. This can quickly fade when implementation fails. Participants therefore stressed the *need to keep the momentum going* between now and the next summit and *focus on the implementation of the 2014-2017 Roadmap*. Quick action is therefore needed in order for the partnership to deliver on its ambitions. The earlier mentioned *jointly owned* priorities such as *youth employment, migration, peace and security, inclusive development and climate change* can lay the foundations of this more genuine partnership, even in multilateral fora. Adjusting the focus of the partnership to include mutual European and African concerns, expectations and priorities holds the best potential for success.

Deal with unresolved issues upfront.

While some progress is being made, a number of unresolved dossiers continue to shadow EU-Africa diplomatic relations - Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), LGBTI rights and the universality of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Consolidating the new way of working will require applying the same open tone to these more contentious issues on the agenda.

Nurture multi-stakeholder engagement between summits. The well-attended pre-summit business events were one of the major achievements of the summit. These events created important opportunities for informal exchange between governments, the private

“Lecturing and sanctioning are the tools from the past, the African bride is realizing that she is beautiful and in demand”

sector, key civil society organisations, policy institutes and members of the Pan-African and European Parliaments. A more structured and continuous involvement of a broader range of stakeholders would benefit the implementation of the Roadmap considerably.

Clarify the complementarity between the EU-Africa framework and EU-ACP relations.

The future of EU-ACP relations was not addressed in the summit discussions. As the EU-Africa framework further takes shape, there is a potential risk for overlap with the ACP-EU partnership and the Cotonou Agreement that will expire in 2020. Participants agreed that a post-2020 ACP group should carefully consider how it relates or adds to the evolving EU-Africa partnership.

Investing in monitoring and evaluation of the partnership. Several participants felt it was a missed opportunity that the summit was not able to fully make an in-depth balance sheet of the EU-Africa partnership so far. The implementation of the 2014-2017 roadmap should therefore be accompanied by a solid monitoring and evaluation system for the actions set out in the priority areas for cooperation.

4. Managing the EU-Africa Summit: Lessons in institutional coherence

The summit was a complex exercise in institutional coordination, not only between the EU and the AUC, but also amongst the different EU and African institutional stakeholders themselves. A number of important lessons can be drawn regarding the institutional frameworks based on this experience.

Prepare longer in advance and allow more time for coordinating continental positions on both sides. Speaking with one voice has never been easy in the complex EU institutional set-up. For

the first time, the EEAS Africa Department took a lead role in the preparatory process of the summit. There was recognition that this was done in a quite effective manner, particularly in brokering a unified European position on the highly political EPAs issue between the EEAS, DG Trade and DG DEVCO. However, on several of the controversial issues it was not easy at all to arrive at a consolidated position. On the African side, the AUC seemed to be facing even bigger challenges to facilitate a unified position among its member states prior to the summit. Under the leadership of Chairperson Dlamini Zuma, the AUC has tried to play a lead role on the African side but the AUC does not have the mandate, legal status and authority to fully assume that lead role.

Ensure effective implementation. Moving into the implementation phase, the main challenge is to agree on an institutional architecture that can drive and follow up on the agreed Roadmap and ensure concrete results. This will require effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that can guarantee a structural multi-stakeholder involvement.

Strengthen the role of Brussels-based African missions. On the African side the summit preparations were largely led from the AU headquarter in Addis Ababa in cooperation with the African member state representations. It was felt that Brussels-based African Embassies could play a stronger role in the preparation of these high-level meetings, but also in the implementation of the summit results.

Conclusions

In retrospect, the 2014 summit was marked by moderate optimism on both sides. The new business-like tone that characterised the talks in Brussels has shown the potential of the partnership to turn the page on the ideological grandstanding of the past and embark

“There is an imbalance of the talking mechanisms. On the EU side there is a sophisticated framework and abundant resources. On the African side, reality is dramatically different”

on stronger, more balanced and meaningful EU-Africa relations.

The summit emphasised the strategic and interest-driven nature of the partnership by focussing primarily on the peace and security and economic components of the partnership. This seems to have been a deliberate choice on both sides, and has contributed to the perception of a constructive and more open summit. Major challenges remain ahead, however, for the implementation of what remains an ambitious intercontinental partnership. Urgent solutions need to be found for the EPA negotiations that drag on far too long. Incoherence on both sides needs to be addressed, including the EU’s “double standards” in dealing with certain African countries and Africa’s continued over-dependence on aid in spite of numerous declarations to also mobilise own African sources of financing.

The more explicit articulation of interests by both sides can be seen as one of the main achievements of this Summit.. Changes are taking place in the balance of power between both continents and this could lead towards a healthier and more genuine political partnership. The operational challenges remain great however. The time is right to capitalize on the positive momentum and to give absolute priority to the implementation of the roadmap. What counts at the end of the day are concrete results in key areas that really matter for both continents.

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