



# FOR A FAIR PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN AFRICA AND EUROPE

Civil society recommendations for  
Germany's 2020 EU Council presidency



# FOR A FAIR PARTNERSHIP

On 1 July 2020, Germany will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) for a period of six months. In preparation for the Council Presidency, the Federal Government has announced its intention to develop Europe further as a force for solidarity, assuming responsibility for peace and security in the world. The deeper partnership between Africa and Europe will be centrally important in this context.

However, a deeper partnership has to be more than a process between governments. It must be built on human relationships, and enable dialogue and participation. It should focus on the realities of life and the well-being of people. For this reason, VENRO invited around 70 organisations from African, European and German civil society to discuss the conditions for the partnership between Africa and Europe as part of its Digital Africa Forum 2020. The results of the consultations are summarised in this policy paper.

Above all, we need a fair partnership that leaves no-one behind. The broadest possible citizen participation is particularly important in this respect. Civil society engagement must be protected and encouraged. African and European civil society organisations recognise these goals and build bridges between the continents and between people.

Principles for a fair partnership with Africa already exist: in the Lisbon Treaty, the EU pledged to promote global peace and social justice, and eradicate poverty. In its Africa policy guidelines, the Federal Government makes a clear commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, to the goals of

the African Union in Agenda 2063, to the Paris Agreement and other international agreements. It recognises the important role of civil society and sees Africa as a partner in a multipolar world.

Now, under its Council Presidency, Germany should advocate a fair partnership and bring Africa and Europe closer together to jointly tackle current crises. African and European civil society must be involved in these political processes in a comprehensive and effective manner. The main opportunities are the drafting of the new AU-EU strategy, the planned AU-EU Summit, the negotiations on the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III, on the post-Cotonou agreement and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and not least the implementation of the European Green Deal. As part of the Trio Presidency with Portugal and Slovenia, Germany must also ensure the continuity and sustainability of partnership efforts beyond 2020.

We call on the Federal Government to focus on the following priorities:

- Global health
- Participation of all generations
- Global climate justice
- Peaceful societies
- Fair economic and trade relations
- Fair digitalisation

In all of these areas, cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and the safeguarding of human rights are of key importance.



# FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

Globally, the corona pandemic has increased public awareness of the structural weaknesses of health care systems and the vulnerability of socially and otherwise disadvantaged people. Around one billion people do not have access to affordable primary medical care of adequate quality as stipulated in the commitment to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) and in the Agenda 2030 (SDG 3.8). Strengthening health care systems must therefore be a priority for political action.

Particularly in Africa, civil society organisations play a key role in containing the corona pandemic, due to a lack of state capacity. They know the local context and should be actively supported so that preventive measures, health education and health services reach all people. Strong health care systems at local level are a basic requirement for successful pandemic containment.

The EU should promote integrated approaches to health through the AU-EU partnership. This is not just about combating diseases. An integrated approach means taking account of all factors that influence the health of the population. These include, above all, poverty and social inequality, lack of food security, discrimination and a lack of political participation, as well as climate change and the destruction of habitats.

In addition, the EU should strategically combine its various approaches and instruments for global health policy to improve the EU's ability to act. It is only on this basis that intensified cooperation

with AU institutions and the World Health Organization (WHO) can bring mutual benefits.

At the beginning of May, the donor conference for a global corona response showed that joint initiatives in the health sector can be successful. However, transparent and binding arrangements are needed for their implementation, to ensure that diagnostic products, vaccines, medicines and health services are accessible and affordable for all. Therefore, also with regard to other infectious diseases, the WHO should be significantly strengthened and cooperation with organisations such as the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance should be expanded. Furthermore, a higher priority should be given to the expansion of health care systems in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. In this context, the EU can promote the realisation of the AU goal that AU member states should dedicate at least 15 percent of their government budget to health.

The EU should assist African partners in using their expertise and experience from previous epidemics such as Ebola, as well as new findings from the corona pandemic, to achieve sustainable improvements in their health care systems. This includes the systematic recording and analysis of possible negative impacts on the prevention and treatment of other diseases.



**For a fair partnership between Africa and Europe in the health sector, we call on the Federal Government to support the following measures:**

- The EU should increase its funding for a joint AU-EU primary health care partnership in African countries to allow all people to live healthy lives (SDG 3) and access quality essential health services (UHC).
- The EU should cooperate more closely with the African Centres for Disease Control (Africa CDC) and support training, diagnostics, exchanges of experts and primary care.
- The AU and EU should work together to expand research, development and the local production of diagnostics, vaccines and medicines in Africa with actors such as the Africa Vaccine Manufacturers Initiative (AVMI).
- The EU needs a special representative for global health and pandemic response in order to bring together its initiatives and competences, increase the effectiveness of European health policy and ensure coherence with other EU policy areas.

## FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL GENERATIONS

Young people in African societies are living increasingly networked lives and using digital platforms and social media to stay politically informed and demand their right to participation. However, the young generation is extremely under-represented in political debates and decision-making processes: while almost half of the population eligible to vote is under 30 years of age, there are only a very few members of parliament in this age group.

Improved political participation of young people, especially girls and young women, should therefore be a core objective of the AU-EU partnership. The perspectives and ideas of young people should

be systematically taken into account in finding solutions to social problems, and in changing discriminatory norms that deprive young people of their right to participation. At the same time, the diversity of gender identities, life realities and opinions of young people must also be reflected in order to facilitate self-determination and independence.

However, the inclusion and support of young people in Africa and Europe must also be accompanied by better funded and higher quality public education systems. Especially girls and young women often only have limited access to education. Children and young people

should be able to take advantage of a wide range of intercultural learning and development opportunities at local, regional and international level. This involves not only individual but also collective learning processes, with the aim of understanding social challenges and developing their own approaches to solving them.

Finally, intergenerational dialogue is also necessary to develop a comprehensive understanding of justice that also includes present-day responsibility for future generations. Such discussions about values and the conditions for a good life for all form an important basis for gender justice, social cohesion and inclusive political decision-making.

**For a fair partnership between Africa and Europe for youth and intergenerational justice, we call on the Federal Government to support the following measures:**

- In Africa-Europe relations, there is a need for new common ways of shaping policy and forming political decisions that allow young people to participate and give them genuine representation, involvement and influence instead of merely symbolic inclusion (“youthwashing”). Germany should offer a corresponding discussion platform for this as part of the AU-EU Summit programme, where the formal involvement of the young generation in the implementation of the AU-EU partnership can be discussed and concrete recommendations formulated.
- The AU and EU should create and finance meeting places and spaces for dialogue between African and European youth. The African diaspora in Europe can build bridges to facilitate a better understanding of each other’s perspectives and concerns. Young women, young people with disabilities and otherwise disadvantaged young people must always be able to participate equally in such exchanges, and must be supported particularly with regard to the issuing of visas.
- Together with European and African partners, Germany should launch an action plan for the mutual recognition of formal education qualifications. The knowledge and skills that African children and young people have acquired at educational institutions in Africa should be officially recognised in Europe according to transparent criteria.
- The Federal Government should work to ensure that sufficient funds are made available in the EU’s forthcoming 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework to increase the number of African students and university staff in the successor programme to Erasmus+ from the current 8,500 participants per year. Here too, emphasis should be placed on gender equality and the equal participation of young people from different socio-cultural backgrounds.

# FOR GLOBAL CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate and generational justice go hand in hand. Inspired by a self-confident global youth, millions of people on all continents are protesting for more climate protection and the preservation of our natural resources for future generations.

People in the Global South and especially in Africa are most affected by climate change, even though they have contributed least to the climate crisis. At the same time, they lack the resources to adapt to the consequences of climate change. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), women and girls suffer disproportionately from climate-related displacement. African and European civil society organisations are mediators who can represent these wide-ranging local experiences and interests in international climate policy.

The EU should pay even more attention to the protests and to the local dimension of climate change in Africa. In particular, the poorest and most vulnerable population groups must benefit from African-European climate protection measures. Support for adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change must benefit local and

regional initiatives and be based on participation and partnership, e.g. support for decentralised renewable energy generation.

The EU should link this local dimension with multilateral efforts and use the AU-EU partnership to take joint action on climate change. Together, Africa and Europe can more effectively advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

But above all, the EU should adapt its own behaviour to the new realities. The European Green Deal and the measures to revive the economy after the corona pandemic should be used to put an end to climate-damaging practices, complete a green energy transition, and reach European CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets sooner. This requires a comprehensive review and coherent orientation of European trade and subsidy policy and other climate-relevant areas.

There can only be a fair partnership between Africa and Europe if the social and ecological transformation of Europe is pursued resolutely on all levels and the implementation of the Green Deal is not at Africa's expense.

## For a fair partnership between Africa and Europe in climate protection, we call on the Federal Government to support the following measures:

- For African and European civil society, the EU's credibility on climate policy stands or falls with its own ambitions. The Federal Government must achieve the climate goals already set and lobby for the EU to increase its climate target for 2030 to at least a 55 percent emission reduction – and to consider a 65 percent reduction – this year as part of the Green Deal.
- Germany should strengthen the AU-EU partnership in climate policy in order to

facilitate a coordinated multilateral approach and accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement including the 1.5 degree target.

→ It must be ensured that the Multiannual Financial Framework provides sufficient funding for EU climate policy measures. On the one hand, this applies to the Green Deal and to financing the “EU reconstruction plan” which must promote social and ecological transformation. On the other, African countries should receive more financial resources and assistance for the necessary transformation towards climate neutrality, especially in the areas of renewable energy sources, forest protection,

as well as adapting to and managing the consequences of climate damage.

→ The EU should structure its climate financing for Africa to support local and regional initiatives and help to increase the effectiveness and scope of African programmes such as the African Renewable Energy Initiative or the African Adaptation Initiative. Civil society should also be given better access to these programmes. With participatory consultations and a bottom-up approach, ideas and measures for climate protection and climate adaptation that are already working can be identified and replicated.

## FOR PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

There can be no sustainable development without peace and respect for human rights. This is only possible in peaceful and inclusive societies in which people can live their lives free of existential fear. State institutions at all levels have the task of ensuring this security and providing legal safeguards. This requires good governance and responsible political action.

However, the reality looks different at present: around two-thirds of the 55 states with a high fragility score in the Fragile States Index are in Africa. According to the “Civil Society Atlas” (*Atlas der Zivilgesellschaft*), more than one in three African states subjects its own citizens to massive repression. In his current report on Women, Peace and Security, the UN Secretary-General notes with dismay that one in five women in complex

humanitarian situations are exposed to sexual and gender-based violence. Since the mid-1990s, more than 36,000 people have lost their lives attempting to cross the Mediterranean alone.

The AU and EU should address these issues together in the interests of all people. A common peace architecture is needed to promote the participation of local actors and civil society organisations in conflict transformation and avoid unintentionally strengthening regimes or militias that disregard human rights or use violence against their own people. The causes and direct consequences of conflicts are manifested locally, so the civilian population must be a key player in peace processes. All efforts towards peace and conflict prevention must be supported by traceable and transparent structures.

Comprehensive conflict analyses taking account of do-no-harm criteria and detailed knowledge of local circumstances provide important foundations for conflict-sensitive engagement. This is particularly true in fragile contexts, for example when working with refugees and the local population. The indispensable contribution of women to violence prevention and peacebuilding, as set out in UN Resolution 1325, should be more prominent and strengthened by a German commitment to peaceful societies.

Refugees, internally displaced persons and victims of armed conflicts and sexual and gender-based violence need support that does not make them petitioners but instead respects their human dignity and self-determination. Through a human rights based approach to humanitarian aid, the EU should ensure that aid agencies have safe access to vulnerable groups, and that those affected can improve their life situation and participate in peace talks or reconstruction efforts.

Political restrictions (“shrinking spaces”) and insufficient funding are hindering the work of large parts of African civil society. Yet their participation in social debates is essential in order to limit political power and achieve structural changes.

In many African countries, unemployment and lack of prospects among young people, a lack of social insurance, gender injustice, corruption and the accumulation of offices, the destruction of habitats and the consequences of climate change are making it difficult to build peaceful and inclusive societies.

Not least, the EU and its Member States should prevent destructive practices that originate in Europe and impede sustainable development in Africa, in particular unfair trade relations, unsustainable business models of European companies and their African partners, or illegal financial flows and tax flight from Africa to Europe.

**For a fair partnership between Africa and Europe to promote peaceful coexistence, we call on the Federal Government to support the following measures:**

- African and European civil society must be fully involved in preparing and holding the AU-EU Summit so as to adequately reflect the cultural and social diversity of the two continents and to jointly develop the bases for a fair partnership between Africa and Europe. This involvement must be based on a genuine representation and participation.
- The Federal Government should work to ensure that the EU provides the necessary financial resources in its Multiannual Financial Framework to meet its own expectations as a peacebuilding actor in Africa. Under the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), funds for development cooperation and civil crisis prevention must not be misappropriated for security policy measures such as border surveillance, migration prevention or boosting military capabilities.
- The EU should step up its diplomatic and financial support for the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to ensure that African capacities and approaches take priority over European security strategies, in accordance with the goals of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.
- EU consultation procedures in African partner countries currently exclude a wide



range of stakeholders. Under its EU Council Presidency, Germany should advocate the broad involvement of the population so that discussions and decisions on human rights issues and civil society involvement in Africa do not take place without the involvement of local actors. The external structures of the EU should be modified accordingly so that local participation opportunities of this kind can be offered.

→ The EU should move away from the dominance of military and security policy

approaches to refugees and migration. The Federal Government should work to ensure that the forthcoming AU-EU strategy focuses on the protection of refugees, humanitarian aid, and legal and safe procedures for the reception of African migrants.

→ The Federal Government should work to ensure that African civil society and the African diaspora in Europe are recognised as important actors in the forthcoming AU-EU strategy, and that their specific expertise is continuously taken into account.

## FOR FAIR ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS

Upheavals in the multilateral order and the current economic crisis make it all the more urgent that Africa and Europe work together to promote a social and ecological transformation of the global economic system for the benefit of all people. Especially in Africa, investments and economic cooperation can only be successful in the long term if they respect the cultural and social rights of indigenous groups as well as the land and property rights of the population. In many countries, up to 80 percent of the working population is employed in agriculture without any other form of social insurance. Local needs, perspectives and strategies should therefore be at the heart of economic relations between Africa and Europe.

Trade can be a driver of development if trade relations are geared towards poverty reduction

and overcoming global inequality. This should therefore be a key concern of the German Council Presidency. Previous cooperation structures between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, with their focus on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), did not do enough to promote development.

Nevertheless, the EU can make important contributions to social and economic stability in Africa. These include promoting intra-African trade and constructive assistance with implementing the African free trade agreement, the removal of trade barriers for processed African products, and the elimination of trade-distorting subsidies that unilaterally favour European agriculture.

The design of the Green Deal and negotiations on the post-Cotonou agreement offer Germany the opportunity to advocate equal trade relations and sustainable investments for mutual benefit, during its Council Presidency. Civil society in all

its various forms should be systematically involved in this process in order to critically monitor government actions and prevent unilateral trade and investment agreements.

**For a fair partnership between Africa and Europe in business and trade, we call on the Federal Government to support the following measures:**

- Germany should work to ensure that the EU and its Member States consistently apply international standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in investment promotion and trade agreements, and press for a binding European supply chain law. European investments in Africa must be based on compliance with international agreements on human rights, social standards and environmental protection.
- Continental trade and value chains in Africa should be fostered and linked together in an integrated way. Investments in rural infrastructure, small-scale agriculture and agroecological farming are needed to ensure that higher productivity does not first contribute to export growth, but to food security and poverty reduction. A key factor here is the innovative capacity and drive of women, who often bear the main burden of producing food and providing for their families without adequate security or a voice.
- In designing the new NDICI and the “EU reconstruction plan”, Germany should work to ensure that sufficient funds are available for investment in agriculture and food security. It should also urge African partners to meet the target set in the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security of a ten percent national budget allocation to agriculture development, and insist that these political processes are accompanied by independent monitoring.
- The Federal Government should work to ensure that the EU targets its economic assistance in Africa primarily at the needs of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. This requires national and local government structures that provide public services such as infrastructure and energy, guarantee legal certainty, promote vocational education and training, and facilitate access to capital, for example through cooperative banks or savings banks. Sustainable investments of this kind create jobs in the rural and urban economies for the young and rapidly growing population.
- The EU should take greater account of the skills and potential of the African diaspora. Remittances and direct investments make an important contribution to Africa’s social and economic development. However, at almost ten percent of the amount, fees for money transfers are far from the goal of the 2030 Agenda to reduce transaction costs to three percent by 2030. The Federal Government should put this issue on the agenda during the AU-EU Summit.

# FOR FAIR DIGITALISATION

Africa and Europe need fair and secure digitalisation that goes beyond currently prevailing models of data capitalism and data surveillance in the American or Chinese mould to promote the common good and sustainable economic development. Together, Africa and Europe can shape a third way that focuses on democracy and participation, sustainable economic development and the protection of our natural resources.

Fair digitalisation means making people's needs and rights the yardstick for meeting the challenges of the digital world. Women, the older generation, people with disabilities and other groups are structurally disadvantaged in the digitalised world when it comes to access and use. A regulatory framework for the many dimensions of digitalisation is necessary and should be discussed in a participatory process that involves ordinary citizens.

Digital tools can improve access to information and increase the reach of public debate, enabling wide political participation. Direct communication and open participation procedures between governments and citizens create more transparency and can increase the legitimacy of government action. Such a transformation is urgently needed as shrinking spaces for civil society and the suppression of public debate violate fundamental human and civil rights.

At present, however, up to 90 percent of women and girls in developing and emerging countries have no basic knowledge of how to use the internet

and simple computer programs. This is why digital participation and digital education for all are crucially important. Many people do not know that digital information even exists, or how new forms of participation can improve their lives. Furthermore, safeguards for data sovereignty or to prevent commercial or political exploitation of personal data are insufficient. In addition, there are many unanswered questions about data security, the protection of privacy, and copyright.

Investments in digital and technical infrastructure must also take greater account of environmental impacts. The production and use of electronic devices and the rising use of the internet lead to increased consumption of raw materials, higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and more electronic waste. Profits from resource extraction are extremely unevenly distributed and mostly flow out of local communities, while follow-up costs and environmental damage remain.

On the other hand, in many countries innovative and replicable solutions and business models are emerging based on digital tools that address important basic needs while creating employment and economic participation. They can facilitate technical solutions such as the direct marketing of smallholders' products, the distribution of medicines or the use of teaching materials, and help to overcome capacity gaps in public service provision.

**For a fair partnership between Africa and Europe in the field of digitalisation, we call on the Federal Government to support the following measures:**

- The AU-EU Summit should announce the launch of an AU-EU Digital Justice Network. In this network, a large number of actors can discuss concrete proposals concerning digital infrastructure, data security and data sovereignty, and contribute to a participative regulatory process.
- Germany should promote a broad alliance for digital skills in Africa so as to use the opportunities offered by digitalisation for participatory and transparent governance, better educational opportunities and economic development. Digital learning platforms should be set up for this purpose that reflect local knowledge and are accessible to all.
- The AU and EU need a strong digital partnership that gives development opportunities to all and ensures that people's creativity can be put to use in new forms of sustainable economic activity. In particular, local platforms, start-ups and civil society initiatives should be supported as they are better able to adapt digital services to local needs. These structures should benefit from seed capital and technology transfer just as much as digital enterprises.

# OUTLOOK AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A fair partnership between Africa and Europe is possible – and necessary. Our proximity and the many diverse links and relations between our two continents have produced a network that calls for exchange and dialogue at all levels of society. Only on this basis can joint solutions be found to important issues of the future.

During the German EU Council Presidency, the AU and EU can set the right course to take African-European relations to a new level. Together with many civil society actors from Africa and Europe, VENRO will critically monitor this work, and demand that the promise of the 2030 Agenda is kept: leave no-one behind!

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**VENRO** is the umbrella organisation of development and humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany. The association was founded in 1995 and consists around 140 organisations. Their backgrounds lie in independent and church-related development co-operation, humanitarian aid as well as development education, public relations and advocacy.

VENRO's central goal is to construct a just globalisation, with a special emphasis on eradicating global poverty. The organisation is committed to implementing human rights and conserving natural resources.

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