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EDITORIAL

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The upcoming African Union (AU) - European Union (EU) Summit, initially scheduled for October 2020 and then postponed due to the pandemic, is crucial for the future of the relationship between the two continents. The European Commission has promised to work on a new design of the EU relationship with the African continent. Civil Society has advocated revisiting the relations between the parties with a view to building an equal partnership, which will help achieve the SDGs and promote Democracy and Human Rights.

Throughout the Portuguese Presidency of the EU Council and within the scope of the project "Towards an open, fair and sustainable Europe in the World", the Portuguese NGDO Platform has carried out several initiatives related to EU-Africa relations, including publishing this issue of the Platform's magazine, with a view to facilitating this discussion.

Consequently, to provide the initial framework for this reflection, we open this issue with an article by Patrícia Magalháes Ferreira and Andreia Oliveira, the authors of the study "European Union and Africa: towards a "partnership of equals"?" that the Platform published recently. They provide an outlook on the changes that the EU-Africa partnership has undergone, describe some of the main challenges and identify some of the conditions necessary for building a more effective, equitable and balanced partnership.

Vitalice Meja, from "Reality of Aid Africa", addresses in his article the importance of democratic appropriation of this partnership - which is still by "definition and application heavily State-driven and high level" under the strong focus of Governments and developed at a high level, with little or no input from citizens. He calls our attention to the importance of involving all stakeholders in the debate and

creating mechanisms of accountability for the citizens of the European Union and Africa.

Providing some views on the economic dimension of what is intended for a fair and equal partnership, Tanya Cox from Concord Europe argues that the European Union needs to work with its partner countries for "reorienting the economy so that it serves people and planet, not the other way around." The author warns of the need for a firm commitment to inclusive and sustainable business models and to partnering with companies that put social and environmental objectives first.

"A partnership of equals for migration" is the input from Luísa Fondello from Caritas Europe. She addresses the EU's approach to migration - mostly concentrated on "securitization and short-term measures", with few proposals for enhancing legal migration, which is a key priority for African countries. According to the author, the EU's approach is inconsistent with its alleged intention to build a more balanced partnership, and is reflected in "a political choice, which is not aligned with the fundamental European values of solidarity and human dignity".

Daniel Wegner and Ian Mengel of the German NGDO Platform - Venro - call for civil society to take part in political processes, such as the AU-EU Summit. The summit was postponed until the French EU Presidency in 2022, offering an opportunity to organise a more inclusive process - notably through digital cooperation -, "to promote social and political participation and to capitalise on the knowledge of the people on the ground".

Priscilla Chomba Kinywa, Digital Transformation Strategist, discusses the Africa-EU partnership in the digital area. Priscilla argues that, while digitalization can be an opportunity to find "innovative solutions to the global challenges facing humanity", its impacts can be negative if contexts and unequal access to technology are not addressed.

"Climate justice within the EU-Africa relations: what's the way forward?" is a reflection by Lydia Lehlogonolo Machaka of CIDSE on the urgency of finding truly transformative, fair and ambitious solutions that will enable the EU "to meet its climate and green agenda and genuinely support Africa to achieve its development goals". The author sustains that it is essential to recognize "the true value and respect for nature", and addresses important issues such as access to energy, rural agriculture, land rights, and the importance of an economy that puts people and the planet before profits.

This issue's interview, which is also available in audio file format, was to Bernardo Ivo Cruz, Counsellor at the Portuguese Permanent Representation of Portugal to the European Union and Delegate to the European Council's Africa Working Party . He talked about the contribution of the Portuguese Presidency towards building an effective, inclusive and equitable EU-Africa relationship.

We hope that this issue of the Magazine of the Portuguese NGDO Platform may contribute to a constructive debate towards a genuine and meaningful EU-Africa relationship.

EUROPEAN UNION AND AFRICA: TOWARDS A PARTNERSHIP OF EQUALS?¹

PATRÍCIA MAGALHÃES FERREIRA

Researcher and consultant for development and cooperation

ANDREIA OLIVEIRA

Consultant for development cooperation

From 2020 to 2021 EU-Africa relations entered a new phase. The African continent has always been at the heart of European development cooperation policy, the relationship between the blocks having evolved in different directions over time. Today, the need to change the paradigm of the relationship between the EU and Africa is consensual; both parties having reasserted their intention to implement a more effective and balanced partnership. Although this intention is unlikely to translate into a partnership "of equals," given the ongoing asymmetries (of development) between the two parties, this does not preclude establishing the necessary premises and meeting the conditions for the relationship to evolve more equitably. But are they being developed?

One of the causes of the volatility of the EU-Africa partnership so far is the different configurations, in a complex mosaic of overlapping - rather than complementary

- strategies and instruments. One of the key elements for the future is the enhanced alignment between the new EU partnership with the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States - OACPS (the oldest and most comprehensive EU alliance, with a new agreement replacing Cotonou) and the continental partnership, reflected in the EU Strategy for Africa (2020) which will hopefully lead to a new joint strategy ².

The parties have been progressively assuming a strategic position based on mutual benefits, at least, but not only at the rhetorical level; the EU is pursuing an approach further aligned with its geopolitical ambitions, while Africa seeks to strengthen a joint vision with greater assertiveness towards the intended external partnerships, of which the EU is a fundamental part. This attempt to shift the paradigm from a vertical to a more horizontal position thus differs in terms of a more strategic and realistic outlook regarding what is feasible to achieve, while also overcoming, at least in part, the weight of the historical legacy that has marked many of the debates between the parties.



Both the formal OACPS-EU partnership and the continental relationship call for the strengthening of multilateralism, translated into the aspiration for greater coordination and party alignment, which has hardly existed so far. Both the High-level EU-Africa green investment forum, led by Portugal, and the Summit on the Financing of African Economies, hosted by France, materialize these conciliation efforts to avoid greater asymmetries in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, while these meetings were held against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda or the Paris Agreement, these international settings

1 This article was based on a study with the same title, published in May 2021, and both were prepared for the Portuguese NGDO Platform, within the scope of the European project "Towards an open, fair and sustainable Europe in the World".

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2 The Cotonou agreement followed the Lomé agreements and governed EU-ACP relations between 2000 and 2020. A new political engagement for the next twenty years was concluded in April 2021. It includes three regional protocols (in the case of Africa, it applies to sub-Saharan Africa only). Under the continental partnership, the first EU-Africa summit was held in 2000, the last Joint Strategy dates back to 2007, and the next summit (the sixth) has been postponed to 2020, sine die.

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have not been systematically used as concrete bases for the relationship between the EU and Africa, as noted in the new EU Strategy for Africa. Additionally, in order to enhance the coordination at the multilateral level, where there is room for improvement, the EU needs to be willing to also support the aspirations of African countries in matters of development, which include foreign debt or access to the COVID-19 vaccines, issues that are currently the subject of intense debate.

The transition to a more geopolitical approach by the EU poses risks to its relationship with Africa. Recalling that the EU and its Member States are still the world's largest donors, the European ambition to prioritise interests regarded as most urgent or with greater impact on domestic affairs, such as migration and security, while mobilizing all policies to this end (including in external action), may overshadow the eradication of poverty as the main goal of development cooperation and weaken policy coherence for development. In addition to this challenge, Europe tends

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to instrumentalise investment in human development merely as a vehicle for economic growth in partner countries. The view of Africa as a battleground for EU-China rivalry, a trend observed in recent years, also seems at odds with the principle of related interests and sustained dynamics between the continents. Additionally, the reinforcement of EU rhetoric on the dissemination (or protection) of the European "way of life" and the "values" in its external action may add complexity to the intercontinental relationship.

Beyond political will, a more equitable and balanced partnership will always depend on the objective conditions for its operationalisation, while assuming the consolidation of joint decision-making and management mechanisms. In reality, many of the EU's initiatives directed to the African continent are still set up as a one-way street, founded on incipient (or even non-existing) dialogue between the parties. For example, one might have expected a more thorough debate about the kind of intercontinental vision that should be pursued, but the formulation of an EU strategy for Africa in 2020 involved little participation at the European level or practically no prior discussion with African partners.

Timely consultations between the parties, which would foster greater involvement and participation of civil society as well, are still constrained by the technical-bureaucratic deadlines and the *modus operandi* of Europe in recent decades, in which the European initiative has taken precedence. Consequently, the EU must evolve in the way it works and collaborates with African partners by systematically fostering timely and inclusive dialogue between parties.

The development of European instruments and their financial mechanisms also follow this univocal trend, and the negotiation of the new EU Multiannual Financial Framework was a missed opportunity to reinforce some principles of development effectiveness. The inclusion of the EDF in the European budget, the increasing prominence of trust funds and investment instruments without joint governance, and also the transition to a new European Union Peace Facility have produced changes that distance partner countries from the decisions that will impact them, resulting in the expected dilution of these principles. If the EU intends to step away from the donor-recipient relationship it must ensure ownership, joint accountability and enhanced reciprocity, particularly during designing and implementation of cooperation programmes.

In addition to the complex scenario of changes in the EU-Africa partnership, there is the obsession over controversial issues such as migration, which can be used as an instrument of pressure between the parties, as observed in the Ceuta humanitarian crisis in 2021. This event exposed the risks associated with the strategy of externalising policies (and the borders) and Europe's overconfidence in the efficacy of the financial resources to the detriment of joint strategies. The fragility of the EU's migration policy has also triggered domestic opposition, e.g. Hungary's refusal to ratify the new agreement with the OACPS (May 2021), which could result in the European Commission taking ownership of this partnership by itself, rather than sharing it with the Member States (as in the previous agreement), thus undermining its importance at the political and strategic level.

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Given the unique opportunity to "build back better", the new partnership between the EU and Africa can be resumed in a more effective, equal and balanced way, provided that its weaknesses are recognised and corrected in good time. Even after Portugal passes on the EU Council Presidency, it should be able to preserve a constructive role in this continental relationship, which entails strengthening national and European development cooperation policy.

³ The impacts of the new financial instrument to support the EU's external action (the NDICI) and the instruments available to the EU-Africa partnership are analysed in the study mentioned before.

A NEW DAWN — TOWARDS A PEOPLE CENTERED AFRICA-EUROPE RELATIONSHIP

VITALICE MEJA

Executive Director of Reality of Aid Africa

The Africa-EU Partnership is the formal political channel through which the European Union (EU) and the African continent work together, engage in political and policy dialogues and define their cooperative relationship. It was established in 2000 at the first Africa-EU Summit in Cairo. The partnership is guided by the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, which was adopted at the second EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon in 2007.

The stated objective of the partnership is to strive to bring Africa and Europe closer together through strengthening economic cooperation and promoting sustainable development, with both continents co-existing in peace, security, democracy, prosperity, solidarity and human dignity.

The partnership has a Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) which sets out the intention of both continents to move beyond a donor/recipient

relationship towards long-term cooperation on jointly identified mutual and complementary interests. It is based on principles of ownership, partnership and solidarity and its adoption marks a new phase in Africa-EU relations. The strategy is implemented through multiannual roadmaps and action plans. The latest declaration was adopted the 5th AU-EU Summit held on 29-30 November 2017 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, under the central theme of 'Investing in Youth for a Sustainable Future', where EU and African leaders defined four new joint priorities for 2018 and beyond. Its main priorities include investing in people through education, science, technology and skills development, strengthening resilience, peace, security and governance, mobilizing investments for Africa's structural and sustainable transformation and migration and mobility. The priorities are set to be reviewed in the next Africa – EU summit.

The current partnership between the European Union and the African continent is exciting yet at the same time puzzling. On the one hand you have one partner who is organised institutionally and supported by strong

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technical, financial and political muscle, and on the other, you have a continent that lacks all these. You have a continent whose collective interest is at times at loggerheads with national interest of its members.

At the citizenry level, both stakeholders of this partnership have failed to recognize the roles and responsibilities of the citizen in the partnership. They have both placed citizen and their Organisations at the periphery of the partnership. This is no wonder, since although the strategies look sound and sensible, their definition and application is still heavily states driven and high level. In essence they have moved to alienate people from the partnership rather than bringing them into it. It is with this in mind that a new Africa -EU partnership is important and necessary. This partnership must be democratically owned, inclusive of citizen, transparent and accountable and focus on results for the populations of both Africa and Europe.



While both the EU and African states must be commended for initiating the partnership, time is now ripe to promote this partnership among their people and have them owning it. It must move from being a project of politicians and technocrats, to principles and values that are propagated and promoted by citizens. In this regard both the African Union and the European Union must put in place frameworks and mechanisms of engaging their citizenry on matters concerning the partnership as well as priorities for the partnership. While the European Union has a history of structurally engaging its citizen through their CSOs, the same cannot be said of the African Union on partnership matters. Of concern however is that both the African Union and

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the European Union lack mechanisms and frameworks of engaging their Citizen on affairs and priorities of this partnership. As such the priories currently under implementation are a product of political negotiations between the political class and technocrats with no or very limited input by the citizen. A structured and institutionalized engagement with CSOs is necessary to bridge this gap and place the people at the centre of the partnership. The engagement will not only enrich the discussions but also bring the partnership closer to the people.

Aside from being more deliberate in engaging CSOs through creating spaces and processes, there is also the need to enable such processes through reforming the legal and regulatory framework of the partnership, setting aside financial resources to enable CSOs to participate in its initiatives, and also build their capacity to play their role. The partnership would also need to create political and policy enabling environment for the foregoing to take place. The objective of engaging CSOs is indeed a means to an end. The target is to democratize the processes and secure ownership by the citizen in the priority setting and the development of the join strategy.

The identified priorities in the current joint strategy underscore the need for an inclusive Africa – European Union partnership.

Targeting education, and skills development and other priorities will warrant involvement of other stakeholder including Technical and vocational training institutions, industries, Civil Society Organisations, political parties etc. It is crucial that the current partnership understands the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders of their society. This will be key in the success of the initiatives emerging from the partnership. The partnership must seek to

understand what issues are important to them now as well as what needs to be put in place to address them. This can only happen if there is a change in the way the current partnership is designed – Top down – From the politicians to the recipient.

In the anticipated review of the joint strategy, it will be important that the proponents of this partnership do their homework to learn about whole society approach – where all actors are part of the implementation of the partnership framework and action plan. It is important that the partnership is sensitive and respects the needs and perspectives of other stakeholders and be mindful of power dynamics at play, and creates a welcoming environment for all actors especially for civil society.

At the centre of ownership and inclusive partnership is the people accountability. The current partnership framework has no accountability mechanisms to citizen of Africa and Europe. People accountability is not part of the fabric of the partnership. As a matter of fact accountability has been reduced to a technical exercise of evaluation and report production of various initiatives of the partnership. There must be a change from the current accountability framework to domestic accountability where both the African Union and the European Union are accountable to their own taxpayers and citizens through different governance channels like parliaments, independent oversight bodies, CSOs and the media. They must also guarantee that they are also accountable for their partnership commitments - to each other, and to civil society. In this regard the partnership will have to address the asymmetric power relations that currently exist in the partnership and create an accountability framework.

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Above all, the essence of the partnership is to deliver positive results for the people of Africa and Europe. The partnership must focus on showing impact on the areas of priority it has selected before moving on to the next best thing.

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INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN EU EXTERNAL ACTION: THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE BUSINESSES

TANYA COX

Director, CONCORD Europe

If the EU is serious in wanting to create a "fair and equal partnership" with Africa, it must work with partner countries to create a sustainable and inclusive economy. This will necessarily involve reorienting the economy so that it serves people and planet, not the other way around. It will also necessitate a thorough review of the economic, financial and trade relations between the two continents. This is key to righting the huge inequalities and power imbalances between Africa and Europe.

Unfortunately, efforts to date have been at best timid. European companies operating in African countries still exploit its natural resources without paying fair prices for those resources. They also still generally externalise the vast majority of costs – causing environmental loss and damage on a massive scale. And very often they exploit people in an effort to drive down costs for consumers (and, let's not be naïve, to make more profit into the bargain). None of this makes for either a sustainable or an inclusive economy.

Not all the solutions fall to Europe... but a lot more could be done

Clearly, African leaders must play their part to improve the lot of their people. It's not as though the inequalities are only of the EU's making. One example here would be to eliminate the corruption and graft which drains government coffers of money that should be used to

EUROPEAN COMPANIES OPERATING IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES STILL EXPLOIT ITS NATURAL RESOURCES WITHOUT PAYING FAIR PRICES FOR THOSE RESOURCES

provide social protection and quality, essential public services for everyone and to invest in infrastructure, energy, technology, research and development – all key to building a robust economy which serves people. Another example, is the need to act with one voice to demand changes of European companies and prevent them from getting 'better deals elsewhere' by pitting one country against another, for example as regards taxation.

However, in light of our colonial history, it is vital that Europe makes a genuine effort to address the mess it has been party to creating. Europe must put in place those conditions over which it has control and which would create a

more level playing field between the continents. Recently, for example, European legislators have been patting themselves on the back for agreeing a new tax transparency law obliging European companies with over €750 million in turnover in two consecutive years to report publicly on the taxes paid on their operations in Europe and a limited number of tax havens. One of the reasons they congratulate themselves on this move is, apparently, because Europe loses so much in illicit financial flows.

So it is scandalous that European governments have been allowed to block the application of this law to non-European countries. The volume of illicit capital flight from the African continent is huge: according to UNCTAD, it accounts for about \$89 billion per year. That is twice the volume of aid that the continent receives and could go a long way in ensuring a sustainable and inclusive economy. It would also go a long way to ending the dependency relationship that aid creates and which embeds the EU and Africa in a neocolonial funding relationship, instead of the 'fair and equal partnership' that the EU claims to seek.

Going beyond business-as-usual

Clearly all private companies must change their methods of production, so that they limit their harm to the environment and their exploitation of people. However, the C-suite of companies must take their operations in a totally different direction so that power and profit are no longer prioritised over people and planet.

Many attempts have been made to influence multinationals' behaviour in one way or another but,



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realistically speaking, this takes years of effort and, as in the example above, is often too little too late. Now, in order to speed things up, a new, parallel economic system should be built. And there are many ways in which Europe and Africa can work together on an equal footing to make this happen. This economy would be made up of sustainable and inclusive businesses; businesses which have a social and environmental mission engrained in their bylaws and guiding all decisions.



A SUSTAINABLE,
JUST, RESILIENT AND
INCLUSIVE SOCIETY
OVER THE LONG TERM
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These are the ideal business partners to work with if the EU is serious about wanting to reduce inequalities, to rebuild better after the COVID-19 pandemic and to support partner countries to do the same. Such companies challenge business-asusual since they look beyond short-term, profit-driven, competitive goals that only serve the wealthy, privileged few and rather look to create value for society at each stage of the supply chain. They put social and environmental goals first. In this way, corporate value chains at last create real value for all.

However, since this model of business is not yet explicitly recognised, the EU and Africa should work together in order to put in place appropriate legal and policy frameworks and to identify ways to support such businesses, for example through ensuring access to capital, promoting 'impact investments', revising public procurement policies to favour true sustainability and ensuring that sustainable and inclusive businesses — or forbenefit businesses as they are sometimes called - are always at the table when public and private sectors dialogue. These are but a few of the measures which could — and should - be envisaged.

A sustainable, just, resilient and inclusive society over the long term depends on and interacts with a sustainable, just, resilient and inclusive economy. Creating that symbiotic relationship will require the EU and Africa to take a proactive approach that is holistic, value-based and people-centred, addressing existing inequalities and power imbalances. It will require leaders to go beyond solving current problems and rather put in place profoundly new ways of working. Which requires totally new ways of thinking. Not to mention the political will to make it happen.

A PARTNERSHIP OF EQUALS FOR MIGRATION

LUÍSA FONDELLO

International Cooperation Officer, Caritas Europe



In March 2020, when the European Union (EU) released its communication on a new comprehensive strategy for Africa, building a 'partnership of equals' was at the heart of its proposal for the revitalization of the partnership framework. Indeed, in the long history of African Union-European Union relations, the first Africa-EU Joint Strategy, adopted in 2007, had already stressed the need to "move away from a traditional relationship" and forge "a true partnership characterized by equality."

THE EU'S APPROACH TO MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF RECENT OR STILL ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES SEEMS TO BE IN CONTRADICTION WITH ITS SUPPOSED INTENTION TO BUILD A MORE BALANCED PARTNERSHIP

However, the EU's approach to migration in the context of recent or still ongoing negotiations with African countries seems to be in contradiction with its supposed intention to build a more balanced partnership, in line with the countries' aspirations. Both in the European Commission's initial proposal for the new partnership framework and in other ongoing processes, such as the new EU Migration and Asylum Pact and the new Agreement between the EU and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (EU-OACPS), this is made clear.

In all cases, the EU's proposals lay down few concrete steps for investing in legal migration, a key priority for African countries. Instead, such proposals focus primarily on short-term securitization measures aimed at tightening border control, reducing illegal migrant flows into Europe, and increasing migrant return rates.

¹ European Commission and EEAS (9 March 2020), Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council - Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa (https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6703-2020-INIT/pt/pdf).

THE EU'S PROPOSALS LAY DOWN FEW CONCRETE STEPS FOR INVESTING IN LEGAL MIGRATION, A KEY PRIORITY FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES

This is obvious from the level of detail and ambition of the proposals for legal migration on the one hand, and the proposals for illegal migration and the return of migrants on the other. In the case of the new EU-OACPS Agreement (which will also govern EU relations with Sub-Saharan Africa), for example, the articles on legal migration remain vague, while those on return and readmission are highly detailed and concrete, including specific deadlines for action and accompanied by an annex on return and readmission.

In view of recent statistics suggesting that 94% of African migration to other continents takes place on a legal basis and the range of requirements in relation to migration (including, for example, protection of the human rights of migrants and increased support for refugees and asylum seekers in destination countries), one may ask why the EU feels that the 'return and readmission' of illegal migrants

requires large-scale initiatives, while other important objectives do not receive the same sort of attention. A common argument made by EU representatives in this context is that investing in effective return and readmission schemes is a legitimate part of the agenda for migration and needs to be done in order to implement already existing, legally binding agreements. However, this raises the question: what about the EU's other important commitments, such as protecting human rights or expanding safe and legal migratory routes?

Ultimately, it is clear that the EU is making a political choice, which is not aligned with the fundamental European values of solidarity and human dignity, with a human rights-based approach, or with the goal of building a true partnership of equals with partner countries. The disproportionate focus on migration issues that are not a priority for most African countries, thus means that this new phase of EU-Africa collaboration does not put partners on a level playing field from the start. Consequently, this seems to be a lost opportunity for building what Europe needs: an approach to long-term migration, founded on human rights and centred on positive aspects.

Contrary to the prevailing trend at the EU level, the concept of migration is a powerful tool for development that should shape the new EU-Africa partnership framework, especially taking into account the social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and how much this calls for actions centred on reducing poverty and social inequalities.

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While the past few months have not yet convinced the current EU political leadership that only a truly egalitarian approach will pave the way for a partnership of equals, we can only hope that the coming months will provide a fresh opportunity to hold inclusive public discussions on the topic, where contradictions in the EU's approach can be ironed out and greater focus put on the many positive features of migration.

2 International Organisation for Migration & African Union Commission (2020), Africa Migration Report – Challenging the narrative (https:// publications.iom.int/system/ files/pdf/africa-migrationreport.pdf).

TRANSLATION BY: TRAVERSÕES, SERVIÇOS LINGUÍSTICOS, LDA



BRIDGING THE GAP: CIVIL SOCIETY BRINGS AFRICA AND EUROPE CLOSER TOGETHER

DANIEL WEGNER AND IAN MENGEL

VENRO EU Presidency Project

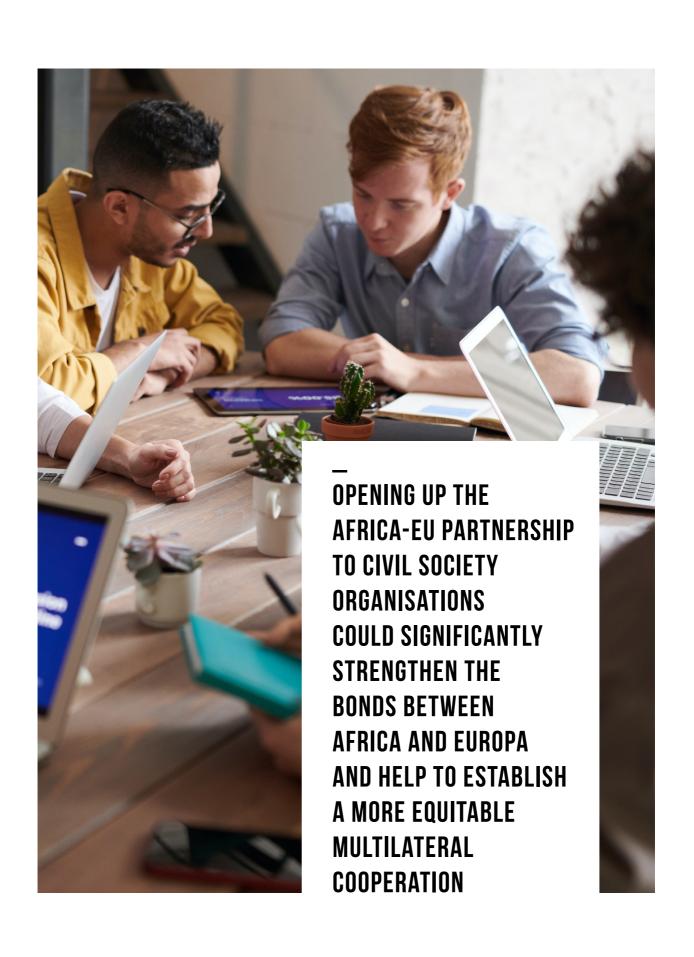
The African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) have repeatedly announced that they will raise the Africa-EU Partnership to a "new level", but so far there is no sign of this. That is all the more reason to involve civil society actors on both continents in political processes such as the AU-EU Summit finally to be held under the French EU Presidency in 2022. The intercontinental relationship must be entrenched in the realities of the people on both sides of the Mediterranean. Opening up the Africa-EU Partnership to civil society organisations could significantly strengthen the bonds between Africa and Europa and help to establish a more equitable multilateral cooperation in key areas like climate change, migration or trade.

An inclusive, bottom-up partnership between Africa and Europe is more necessary than ever. During the German and Portuguese EU Council Presidencies there has been no noticeable impetus. The wrangling over the EU

budget for development cooperation and the new, yet already anachronistic Post-Cotonou Agreement have rather shown that the EU is not committed enough to engage with its partner countries in the Global South on an equal footing. The AU, on the other hand, seems to become more interested in other geopolitical partners like China or Russia, who promise more beneficial partnerships. The EU needs to increase its efforts and offer meaningful advantages to African partners, otherwise it risks losing its position as Africa's main political and economic partner.

Civil society contributions essential for African-European relations

What has become clear in the context of the repeatedly postponed AU-EU Summit is that the partnership between the two continents cannot flourish if it is only based on high-level political meetings. African-European relations must involve larger parts of our societies to



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make a step forward. The postponement of the Summit at least offers a chance to do better and organise an inclusive process that allows civil society actors and also voices from the grassroots to be part and parcel of the intercontinental cooperation.

Without doubt, African and European civil societies carry important, yet largely untapped competences for the Africa-EU Partnership. New forms of digital cooperation can promote

the social and political participation and harness the knowledge of people on the ground. The German, Portuguese and Slovenian civil society platforms, in collaboration with the European confederation CONCORD, have used this dynamic and organised various virtual events and initiatives to involve civil society actors from both continents in the discussions for a renewed Africa-EU Strategy. This included the first-ever Africa-Europe Civil Society Survey with more than 360 participants or the digital conference "A Partnership of Equals: Africa-EU Relations in an Increasingly Complex World", organised by the Portuguese civil society platform in May 2021.

By building (digital) bridges between the local level and political discussions, civil society can make the Africa-EU Partnership more transparent and accessible. The new Africa-EU Strategy, which is to be adopted at the upcoming AU-EU Summit, can only benefit the more than 1.6 billion people on both continents if participation and codetermination are possible. Digital formats should be one way to promote the involvement of civil society and ordinary citizens alike.

Opening up the Africa-EU Partnership to civil society on both sides will surely strengthen relations between the two continents. This should include, among other things, exchanges between citizens or hands-on projects bringing people together on matters of common interest. The German, Portuguese and Slovenian governments still have time to initiate such initiatives during the current EU Trio Presidency. This would be an important step towards a new quality of African-European relations.



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_ PORTUGUESE NGDO PLATFORM, 2018

VENRO is the umbrella organisation of development and humanitarian nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany. The association was founded in 1995 and consists of 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.

WHY THE AFRICA-EU DIGITALISATION AGENDA IS A PRIORITY

PRISCILLA CHOMBA KINYWA

Digital Transformation Strategist

Over the last two decades various conversations on the potential of digitalisation to accelerate the achievement of mutually beneficial objectives of African nations and those of the European Union have taken place. Among these objectives are improved economic opportunities; availability of gender responsive public services in areas such as health and education; citizen participation in governance and democratic rule; peace and security; and a slowing down or reversal of the damage done to our environment; among others.

While the plight of humanity is unquestionably connected regardless of location (the effects of climate change are felt across the globe; deep polarisation and inequalities are prevalent on many continents; insecurity and human rights abuses are pervasive) it must be understood that our cultural contexts, religious beliefs, politically ideologies and economic trajectories all differ and therefore call for a deep understanding and contextualisation of our digitalisation journeys.

The differences become even clearer when we discuss an Africa-EU partnership on digitalisation – according to the World Economic Forum Africa's youth population will triple in the next three decades while in contrast data shows that Europe's aging population will increase significantly. Digitalisation presents an opportunity for Africa to potentially provide skills and expertise to Europe from within the continent but with internet penetration at circa 40% for Africa and over 90% for Europe, such benefits cannot be fully realised.

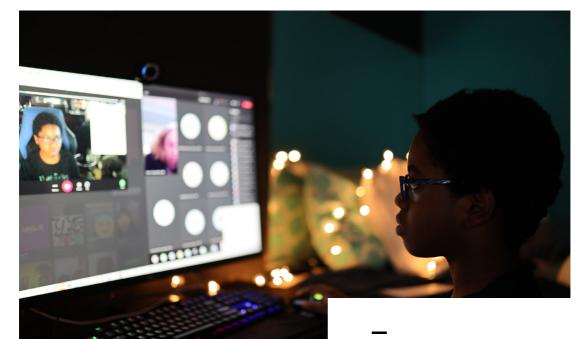
While developed nations in the EU and other places discuss the impact on the environment that their industrialisation has brought about and work to reduce their carbon footprints and contribution to the climate disaster Africa's developing nations are still in the early stages of their development and should not be penalised and stopped from growing their economies. Technology and digitalization present an opportunity for more carbon-neutral practices, knowledge transfer on climate-friendly technologies and opportunities for collaborative research into how developing nations can do so while working to protect the environment. As it stands, regulation to promote climate-friendly energy solutions is sorely lacking and less than

half of Africa's countries have a working e-waste policy. The right investments in digitalisation will not only yield better results for the African continent but for the globe as a whole.

Often forgotten in the digitalisation conversation is how technology can be a double-edged sword if not approached in a considered and data-driven manner while taking into account the potentially negative consequences that a cookie-cutter strategy that does not factor in inequalities in access to technology might lead to.

While the digitalisation of government processes is desired, doing so before ensuring equitable access for all citizens will simply work to deepen that divide. The privileged few who are computer literate and have access to a device with which to interact with government services will have even more access to opportunities while leaving the poorest even further behind.





In addition, achievement of the goals in the Africa-EU partnership are dependent on good governance. This can only be achieved if citizens are given equal opportunities to take part in civic discourse, engage their leaders on issues that matter to them and participate in local and national decision-making structures. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed just how much those lagging behind in their access to technology were further distanced from decision making spaces, with their voices going unheard, with limited access to the right information, and in some cases no means with which to seek recourse for injustices against them.

We have also witnessed politicians in all contexts weaponizing the power of technology to create misinformation, conduct surveillance on their citizens, silence their critics and influence political outcomes.

PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT IN THE CONVERSATION ON DIGITALISATION IS THE POTENTIAL THAT IT HAS TO CONNECT COMMUNITIES GLOBALLY

Perhaps most important in the conversation on digitalisation is the potential that it has to connect communities globally. In an age where we are witnessing deep polarisation it is critical that technology is harnessed to enable cultures and communities to interact, share and engage in order to deepen understanding and increase empathy. This could potentially lead to more respect for the rights of vulnerable groups — women, people of colour, people of a different sexual orientation, and more.

And of course, data shows that technology contributes to positive economic outcomes, which in turn have an effect on issues such as irregular migration and conflict brought on by economic challenges.

Many barriers exist in this digitalisation journey, particularly for the African continent. On the one hand basic infrastructure for digitalisation such as low energy solutions and adequate digital skills in the school system and workforce are lacking, and on the other challenges that appear more urgent such as poor health and education systems are also present, making it difficult for governments to invest appropriately in digitalisation even when evidence suggests that digitalisation itself may very well help to advance these. For the EU, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to be understood fully and the risk exists that EU countries will turn inwards in a bid to build back better for their own populations first, neglecting the benefits that exist for them when they invest in appropriate digitalisation policies and implementation.

With the right engagement and investment in digitalisation, it is clear that the populations of Africa and the EU have an opportunity to connect in ways that will result in innovative solutions to the global challenges facing humanity and should be treated as a priority, regardless of what other agendas might threaten to get in the way.

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CLIMATE JUSTICE WITHIN THE EU-AFRICA RELATIONS: WHAT'S THE WAY FORWARD?

LYDIA LEHLOGONOLO MACHAKA

CIDSE Climate Justice and Energy Officer

The severity of climate change's impacts is increasingly clear, particularly in Africa, one of the most impacted regions, despite contributing the least to its causes and having few resources to adapt. Yet, the attention within the EU-AU partnership is focused on Europe's needs rather than Africa's. Against this backdrop, fair and bold transformative solutions worldwide are urgently needed to allow the EU to meet its climate and green agenda and genuinely support Africa to achieve its development goals through renewable energy sources to thrive while inspiring others. But what are the key steps to take to achieve climate justice? Here are some lessons.

The EU's domestic climate action ambition has significant implications for climate impacts in Africa. Climate change adversely impacts health, including mental health. It has recently been linked to the emergence and spread of

new infectious diseases such as COVID-19. The greater the global warming, the greater the inability to effectively recover and adapt from climate and health risks. To act justly and effectively, the partnership should firmly stay committed to the Paris Agreement's key principles of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR&C).

Secondly, recognising the true value and respect for nature is central to addressing the root causes of the problem and finding solutions that promote a unifying and profoundly transformative climate justice action in EU-Africa relations. In African worldviews and religions, nature is a sacred gift from God and a source of life. It consists of a complex, yet harmonious coexistence of interdependent community life where plants, animals and humans have intrinsic values, spiritual existence, and unique purpose at any given time. Africa's survival, cultural identity, language, dignity, and sense of belonging, as well as people's wellbeing, hinges therefore



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EU-AFRICA RELATIONS

UN WOMEN | WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/UNWOMEN/3112274890

on nature's wellbeing. All other parts of this ecological system will sadly deteriorate or die as some of its parts currently perish, be it a part of the ecosystem or a group of people with their culture, identity, and way of life. Hence Africa's reverence, respect, and care for the land remains a central and eternal responsibility and offering in return to all life on earth and beyond.

Furthermore, according to African traditional knowledge systems, no part of nature, particularly land and water, should be commodified nor treated as individual possessions. They are an indigenous and local source of life, nutrition and health, medicine, ritual, and celebration. Therefore, respect for such spiritual foundations is a sacred and essential action to be safeguarded in its own right at all times. Investments for Africa's climate action should prioritise and protect Africa's interests, cultural heritage, and

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wellbeing. In addition, indigenous knowledge contributes significantly to climate and recovery policies and the UN Sustainable Development Goals and cannot be marginalised.

Next, low investment in climate finance limits Africa's climate action. The energy sector, particularly power generation sources that are heavily fossil-fuel based, is the largest source of energy-related CO2 emissions globally. The EU-Africa partnership should co-design and implement concrete measures to phase out fossil fuels reliance and equitably switch to decentralised systems powered by 100% renewable energy sources by 2030. To effectively recover and achieve policy coherence to meet the Paris Agreement's (PA) 1.5°C target and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) goals, a transition like this must be urgent, sustainable, fair, inclusive, and transparent, embracing diversity, human rights, and gender equality.

Africa has an abundance of renewable energy resources that must be harnessed to meet the rising energy demand and provide decentralised and affordable energy access for its communities. The EU-Africa partnership should achieve transformational and systemic changes in climate finance, and energy generation, efficiency, distribution, consumption and support, as well as other sectors.

The next EU-AU strategy also demonstrates a very narrow understanding of innovation by focusing on technologies and digitalisation without paying adequate attention to potential impacts on local communities. Not all mitigation measures are beneficial to the environment, health and wellbeing. For example, among others, the significant use of biofuels could reduce the amount of land available for agriculture, creating food insecurity and worsening poverty.

Furthermore, putting the SDGs and the PA at the heart of the EU-Africa Partnership is a positive step towards addressing the continents' most pressing challenges. However, the foundation of the partnership is still based on a massive institutional power imbalance. The partnership promotes prosperity, but Africa's reality over decades of cooperation demonstrates immense poverty.

It is also striking how agriculture and land issues are not prioritised. The rural economy has long been recognised as a critical driver of poverty reduction, and Africa's vast diversity necessitates context-specific locally driven solutions, and food systems approaches such as agroecology. However, the current strategy has instead focused on creating a favourable environment for large-scale and industrial agriculture promoting monocrop production and causing harm to Africa's ecosystems and health, denying locals of their land rights.



Finally, urgent transformative policies are needed to rebuild societies capable of addressing the climate and health crises through economies that truly put people and the planet before profits. Several European companies, while prioritizing profits above social or environmental concerns, have proved incapable of ensuring respect for nature, human dignity and human rights, and have negatively affected the lives of millions of African citizens through exploitation, pollution, land-grabs, evictions, silencing, and assassination of indigenous peoples.

In the truest sense of climate justice, these abuses must end and those affected must be compensated.

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1 See a joint statement by a very broad alliance of African secular and faith-based CSOs in an informal platform which they call "Our Land is our Life".

TALKING WITH BERNARDO IVO CRUZ

Counsellor at the Portuguese Permanent Representation of Portugal to the European Union and Delegate to the European Council's Africa Working Party

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

Luís Matos Martins, member of the board of the Portuguese NGDO Platform

Consolidating the EU-Africa partnership and preparing the 6th EU-African Union Summit were the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency. Although the date of the Summit has not been set, the past months have been important to move the process forward. How did the Portuguese presidency leave its mark in this field and what has it managed to achieve of importance in the last few months for EU-Africa future relations?

Of all of the European Union's foreign relations, its relationship with the African Union is by far the most intense. The European Union is always or almost always Africa's greatest partner. The Summit, which should have taken place already, was postponed because the Heads of State, Government and the institutions of the European Union and the African Union realised

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that the Summit is too important to be reduced to a set of digitally delivered statements, which is why we kept postponing the Summit until it becomes possible to gather together the Heads of State and Government, the Presidents of the institutions of the European Union and the African Union in the same room, because we want the Summit to be a true forum of negotiation, discussion, progress, on the shared agenda between the European Union and the African Union. The Portuguese Presidency is left with this frustration, because we wanted to hold the Summit during our Presidency but the pandemic prevented it. Nevertheless, a great deal of preparatory work has been put into transforming the relationship between Europe and Africa involving shifting donor-receiver relationship to a partnership relationship of real partners between Africa and Europe.

The idea of building a balanced EU-Africa partnership between parties going beyond the traditional "donor/recipient" relationship has been at the top of the agenda of the discussion on future relations with the African continent. How in your view may this intention materialise?

Indeed the most important thing in the relationship between Europe and Africa is to move away from the idea that Europe donates and Africa receives and towards a true partnership of equals between the two continents. And this is reflected at all levels: for example, in trade, but it is also in the logic of how development aid works, to which Europe remains very committed - we are the largest contributors to the development of Africa, in

a logic of donation and not in a logic of loan. But this logic does not mean that Europe tells Africa what to do: it is the logic of a more transitional relationship, of identifying the objectives and processes together. We are talking about a relationship that is founded on common goals which both parties have set and acknowledged under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We also aim at achieving economic growth, social development, environmental sustainability, models of good governance, and new mechanisms for financing development, in which we bring to the table the private sector, together with the traditional actors of sustainable development, such as NGDOs, Governments, foundations, etc. And so, there are many actors here sharing the same goals and with whom we want to work.

One of the events that marked the Portuguese EU Presidency was the High-level EU-Africa green investment forum, which reflected the priority of investment and made the private sector also accountable for co-financing sustainable development. How do you feel the work performed by the Portuguese Presidency of EU in this area can help to achieve a more balanced partnership favouring sustainable development?

Within those five pillars of sustainable development - economic growth, social development, environmental sustainability, good governance, and developing financing mechanisms - the private sector has an important role to play in the logic of longterm development. One cannot forget that the logic of the private sector is different to that of NGDOs. For example, companies only survive if they make profit, so the private sector invests only in projects that yield a return. And I am assuming here companies which are socially and environmentally responsible, and not those that seek to invest wildly without social or environmental concerns. However, when companies invest in a developing country, in this case we are talking about Africa, they are investing for a return, but at the same time they are creating jobs, locally.

Structured employment that pays decently fosters social development with immediate effect. Private investment, on the other hand, allows Governments to collect taxes which, in turn, enables them to adopt public policies that are not in the private sector's remit: health, education, infrastructure, etc. However, for the private sector to invest in developing countries, and to invest in a sustainable way, the conditions must also be in place for the private sector to take risks. Part of these conditions are found in good governance (education, Rule of Law, etc), the other part in investment financing mechanisms. The financing mechanisms must also consider particularly the banking sector, but not only, because the risk that the private sector undertakes in development investment is different from when the investment is made in OECD countries. The Investment Forum that the Portuguese Presidency put together lasted months. It gathered together countries, the European Union and the African Union, local organisations in Africa, and the private sector to discuss in a structured manner the needs and the expectations of countries and Civil Society Organisations for development

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in Africa, and the individual roles. This structured dialogue that Portugal put in place during the Presidency allowed us to establish a common goal and paved the way for a more fruitful dialogue from now on. Therefore, this was Portugal's biggest contribution to this integrated development agenda, it had everyone talking to each other.

We believe that achieving a genuine and balanced partnership inevitably depends on the willingness to promote dialogue and to strengthen inclusive mechanisms for the participation of citizens and civil society on both continents. How willing do you think the Council is to move this issue forward, and how do you think civil society can be more involved in these processes?

t is very interesting to watch the creative tension between Member States in the Council. Some hope to speed up the Development Agenda, but others are more cautious and say "we're doing this in partnership, so it's no use wanting to advance faster than our partners are capable of". This creative tension is also present in the relationship between the European Union and the African Union in all of its dimensions. And in Civil Society Organisation relations, between private sector organisations, between Governments and international organisations. But we all realise that we will build this sustainable development partnership only once we are all working on the same ideas. For INCREASINGLY THERE IS A
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example, we know the impact of European economic activity on the environment is higher than that of African countries, but we also know that Africa needs to develop economically. We must always strike a balance. It's not an easy conversation, as there are many variables that must be included in this dialogue. But increasingly there is a common understanding of economic growth, social development, environmental sustainability, the elements of good governance, and financing mechanisms. More and more Africa and Europe are seeing eye to eye.

This is an abridged version of the interview. For the entire interview click here (audio version in portuguese).

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African Union

European Union

ACEP ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA A COOPERAÇÃO ENTRE OS POVOS

ADDHU ASSOCIAÇÃO DE DEFESA DOS DIREITOS HUMANOS

ADIRN ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO INTEGRADO

DO RIBATEJO NORTE

ADPM ASSOCIAÇÃO DE DEFESA DO PATRIMÓNIO DE MÉRTOLA

ADRA ASSOCIAÇÃO ADVENTISTA PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO,

RECURSOS E ASSISTÊNCIA

AIDGLOBAL ACÇÃO E INTEGRAÇÃO

PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO GLOBAL

AJAP ASSOCIAÇÃO DOS JOVENS AGRICULTORES DE PORTUGAL

AMU AÇÕES PARA UM MUNDO UNIDO

APDES AGÊNCIA PIAGET PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO

APF ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA O PLANEAMENTO DA FAMÍLIA

APOIAR ASSOCIAÇÃO PORTUGUESA DE APOIO A ÁFRICA

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ATLAS ASSOCIAÇÃO DE COOPERAÇÃO PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO

CÁRITAS PORTUGUESA

CHAPITÔ

CIDAC CENTRO DE INTERVENÇÃO PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO

AMÍLCAR CABRAL

CPR CONSELHO PORTUGUÊS PARA OS REFUGIADOS

EAPN PORTUGAL REDE EUROPEIA ANTI-POBREZA

EQUIPA D'ÁFRICA

FCL FUNDAÇÃO CIDADE DE LISBOA

FEC FUNDAÇÃO FÉ E COOPERAÇÃO

FGS FUNDAÇÃO GONÇALO DA SILVEIRA

FUNDAÇÃO BOMFIM

FUNDAÇÃO CHAMPAGNAT

FUNDAÇÃO TERESA REGOJO PARA

O DESENVOLVIMENTO

G.A.S. PORTO GRUPO DE ACÇÃO SOCIAL DO PORTO

GIRL MOVE PORTUGAL

GRAAL ASSOCIAÇÃO DE CARÁCTER SOCIAL E CULTURAL

HEALTH4MOZ MOZAMBICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

ICE INSTITUTO DAS COMUNIDADES EDUCATIVAS

IMVF INSTITUTO MARQUÊS DE VALLE FLOR

IPAV INSTITUTO PADRE ANTÓNIO VIEIRA

KARINGANA WA KARINGANA ASSOCIAÇÃO

LEIGOS PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO

MDM - P MÉDICOS DO MUNDO PORTUGAL

MENINOS DO MUNDO

MONTE DESENVOLVIMENTO ALENTEJO CENTRAL - ACE

MSH MISSÃO SAÚDE PARA A HUMANIDADE

MUNDO A SORRIR ASSOCIAÇÃO DE MÉDICOS

DENTISTAS SOLIDÁRIOS PORTUGUESES

OIKOS COOPERAÇÃO E DESENVOLVIMENTO

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ROSTO SOLIDÁRIO ASSOCIAÇÃO DE DESENVOLVIMENTO

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SAPANA

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SOLSEF SOL SEM FRONTEIRAS

SOPRO SOLIDARIEDADE E PROMOÇÃO

TERRAS DENTRO ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA O

DESENVOLVIMENTO INTEGRADO

TESE ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO

UMP UNIÃO DAS MISERICÓRDIAS PORTUGUESAS

UNICEF COMITÉ PORTUGUÊS PARA A UNICEF

URB-ÁFRICA ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA A

COOPERAÇÃO E O DESENVOLVIMENTO URBANO

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