

# Migration and sustainable development in the African Union-European Union summit

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"This background document has been realized in the framework of the project, to spread data and information based on a scientific analysis. If you want to know more about this project and be part of its activities, please feel free to contact the leading partner Diaconia in Czech Republic (email: [nozinoval@diakoniespolu.cz](mailto:nozinoval@diakoniespolu.cz)), as well as Focsiv in Italy (email: [f.novella@focsiv.it](mailto:f.novella@focsiv.it))."

<sup>1</sup> This background paper has been realised in the framework of the "Faces of Migration" project (Migrant and SDGs, contract number CSO-LA/2018/401-798), co-financed by the European Union. The paper has been elaborated by Aurora Ianni and Mattia Giampaolo with the coordination of Andrea Stocchiero (Focsiv). This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

On February 17-18, 2022, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the African Union and the European Union met in Brussels for the **6th EU-AU Summit**. The two entities agreed on a **common vision for a new partnership to achieve solidarity, security, peace, sustainable development and prosperity** for the citizens of the African Union and the European Union by bringing together people, regions and organizations.<sup>1</sup>

These priorities were already underlined in the June 2020 European Council conclusions, which focused on the interconnection and linkages between the EU and the AU, as well as the need to boost relations on common goals, also by intensifying the inclusive exchange with citizens, civil society, the diaspora, youth, the private sector, and top thinkers and decision-makers from both continents.<sup>2</sup>

These commitments are in line with the urgency of strengthening the link between migration and development, clearly underlined first by the Sustainable Development Goals and then by the Global Compact on Migration.

Indeed, Goal 10 of the **2030 Agenda** aims to **reduce inequalities** within and between countries **by facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people**, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies (target 10.7).

Also, the **Global Compact on Migration**, particularly in its objectives 18-21, calls for investment in migrants' skills, diasporas, remittances and returns, in order for migrants to be the best players in sustainable development<sup>3</sup>.



Ph. Global Goals for Sustainable Development

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eu-africa/>

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/press/press-releases/2020/06/30/on-the-path-to-a-deeper-and-stronger-partnership-living-up-to-the-european-and-african-aspirations-council-adopts-conclusions-on-africa/>

<sup>3</sup> See A. Ianni, M. Giampaolo, Migration and Development, Focsiv, maggio 2020, al link <https://gcap.global/wpcontent/uploads/2020/06/Background-Document-Migration-and-development-Focsiv-n.-6-ENG-12.05.2020.pdf>.

### Objectives 18-21 of the Global Compact on Migration

**18.** Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences

**19.** Create conditions for migrants and Diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries

**20.** Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants

**21.** Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration



Ph. Global Compact on Migration



Ph. [www.leggo.it/](http://www.leggo.it/)



Ph. [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net)



## 2. THE FRAMEWORK OF EU-AFRICA RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

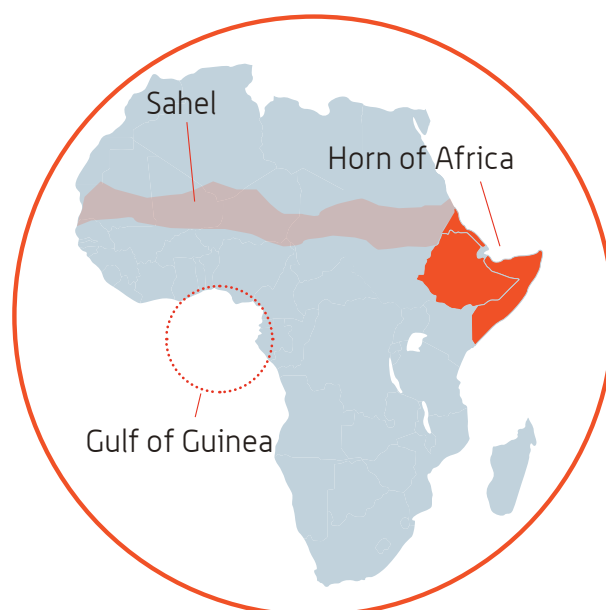
The EU-AU summit is not the only cooperation mechanism in place to regulate relations between African countries and the European Union. Others include framework agreements such as the Cotonou Agreement and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, the latter adopted in 2007 and implemented through periodic action plans.

In March 2020, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) issued a joint communication entitled “Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa,” which proposes working together on five major global trends: green transition and energy access; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace, security and governance; and migration and mobility. Also, there are “Regional strategies,” all of which were adopted in the 2015-2020 5-year period, such as the Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa and the **Regional Plan for the Horn of Africa**, which aims to address the challenges of radicalization, migration and forced displacement and the influence of the entire region on the Horn of Africa.

The **Regional Plan for the Gulf of Guinea** and its action plan to combat organized crime, especially involved in human trafficking, and foster maritime security, and the **Regional Action Plan for the Sahel**, adopted to prevent radicalization, create opportunities for the younger generation, combat human trafficking, and manage borders, migration and mobility<sup>4</sup>.

As a result, cooperation between the EU and Africa has over the years included aid, trade, development, security, counter-terrorism and migration.

But the latter has always had a specific “weight” in the EU’s approach to the African continent. Just to name a few measures, in November 2015, European and African leaders endorsed the Valletta Action Plan, which aims to address the influx of migrants into Europe, and a number of other measures are in place, especially in terms of border management agreements with North African countries, and programs aimed at providing protection and assistance to refugees and vulnerable migrants, improving living conditions and resilience, and promoting migration and labor mobility, such as those adopted in the framework of the **EU Emergency Trust Fund per l’Africa**.<sup>5</sup>



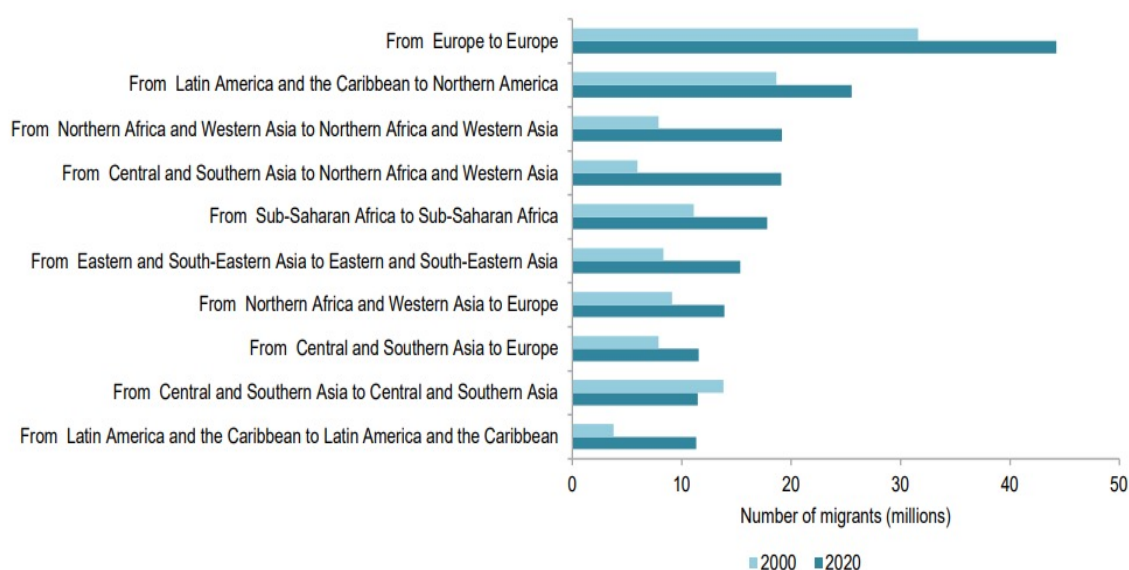
<sup>4</sup> For EU-Africa relations in detail see : <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eu-africa/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

Until today, relations have been based on the common goals of development, security and peace. However, good intentions are also useful in addressing the drivers of migration and reducing irregular “departures,” a concern that has become rooted in the European political and social landscape. However, it should be remem-

bered that it is not only movements to the EU that are frequent. Africa is also experiencing high levels of intra-regional migration flows. According to UNDESA figures, with an eye on migration corridors over the 20-year period between 2000 and 2020, significant flows originated from Africa and “ended up” in Africa. (figure 1).

**Fig. 1:** Migration corridors by region, origin and destination, between 2000 and 2020



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020b). *International Migrant Stock 2020*.

Note: Refers to migrants living in the same region as their country or area of birth. The corridors are the 10 largest for the year 2020.

Source: UNDESA, International Migration 2020, highlights.<sup>6</sup>

With the Covid-19 pandemic as a breakthrough, it has become clear that the globalization of “movements” needs common actions and global responses that cannot be limited to the most “developed” part of the world. Also, consi-

dering the challenges Europe faces on its Eastern border, good and improved relations with the African giant are of crucial importance to the EU.

<sup>6</sup> See: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa\\_pd\\_2020\\_international\\_migration\\_highlights.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa_pd_2020_international_migration_highlights.pdf)

### 3. EU-AU SUMMIT JOINT STATEMENT: KEY COMMITMENTS<sup>7</sup>

During the February summit, European and AU leaders committed to a **Joint Vision for a renewed partnership** to build a common future, as closer partners and neighbors. The summit held several Roundtables covering Financing for sustainable and inclusive growth; Climate change and energy transition; digital and transport (connectivity and infrastructure); Peace, Security and Governance; Private sector support and economic integration; Education, culture and vocational training; migration and mobility; Agriculture and sustainable development; and Health systems and vaccine production.

Based on what the two considered “fruitful discussions”, the renewed EU-AU partnership is to be founded “on geography, acknowledgment of history, human ties, respect for sovereignty, mutual respect and accountability, shared values, equality between partners and reciprocal commitments”<sup>8</sup>.

According to the statement, the most urgent challenge to boost partnership is to ensure “**fair and equitable**” **access to vaccines**. The EU has committed to provide at least 450 million doses of vaccine to Africa by mid-2022 and has also provided more than \$3 billion to the Covax Facility and to vaccination on the African continent.

Most importantly, the statement emphasizes that the African Union and the European Union urge the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) contribution against the pandemic and for global economic recovery by constructively committing to an agreement on a comprehensive

response to the pandemic, which includes trade and intellectual property aspects (particularly the WTO TRIPs<sup>9</sup>).

In addition, the EU and AU agreed on **boosting scientific cooperation** among researchers to jointly develop knowledge and share technology and expertise, including through a joint AU-EU Innovation Agenda. Increasing mobility, especially in tertiary education, was also a major theme of the summit. To improve mutual understanding and **foster excellence**, the EU and AU will support exchanges of young citizens, volunteers and students through the expanded Erasmus+ programme and the development of university partnerships. The circulation of artists and artworks between the two continents will be fostered, with a view to promoting access to and protection of cultural heritage.

On sustainable development, the statement announces an Africa-Europe investment package of at least €150 billion to support shared ambitions for 2030 and the AU Agenda 2063. The **Global Gateway Investment Package** aims to **boost large-scale sustainable investments** in energy, transport and digital infrastructure; energy and green transition; digital transformation while promoting digital entrepreneurship and skills; sustainable growth and decent job creation; transport facilitation and efficiency of connected transport networks; and increased mobility and employability of students, young graduates and skilled workers.

<sup>7</sup> The paragraph summarizes the main commitments of the EU-AU joint Statement. Full version available at [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54412/final\\_declaration-en.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54412/final_declaration-en.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> For the paper, see [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54412/final\\_declaration-en.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54412/final_declaration-en.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> See: [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/trips\\_e/trips\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/trips_e.htm).

In addition to support for industrialization and the development of sustainable and resilient value and supply chains, the Package will be complemented by packages to **foster equitable and fair access to health and education systems**.

To implement the Package, the EU and AU are committed to leveraging public funds to stimulate private investment by mobilizing innovative financing instruments, as well as international and national financial development institutions, including the European Investment Bank and the African Development Bank, public-private partnerships, and using Official Development Assistance and financial tools such as infrastructure trusts and capital market instruments. Efforts to promote regional and continental economic integration, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Area, were also emphasized.

In addition, the EU-AU Joint Vision committed to **enhancing cooperation for peace and security** through support for capacity building, equipment and training of African defense and security forces to strengthen autonomous peace operations, including through EU missions and assistance measures, as well as by supporting African-led Peace Support Operations and intensifying security cooperation, including on cybersecurity.

Regarding the protection of human rights, particularly of women and children, the two entities will join efforts to strengthen the rule of law and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security, Children and Armed Conflict and Youth, Peace and Security Agendas.

On **migration and mobility**, cooperation will be enhanced in preventing irregular migration and human trafficking, strengthening border management and achieving improvements in return, readmission and reintegration, including promoting voluntary return, through joint action and capacity building, also with African institutions dedicated to migration.

The joint vision emphasizes a commitment to finding durable solutions for asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants in need of international protection, committing to revitalizing the work of the joint AU-EU-UN Tripartite Task Force, strengthening asylum systems to provide adequate reception and integration.

Emphasis will be maintained on addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement and enhancing legal migration pathways between the EU and AU and within Africa, as well as supporting technical and vocational education to face brain drain by investing in youth and women empowerment.

A key aspect is the joint **promotion of effective multilateralism**, pledging to work towards more convergent positions in multilateral fora to reduce global inequalities, promote solidarity and international cooperation, combat climate change and improve the delivery of global public goods. In addition, the vision pledges to provide political support to achieve the necessary reform of the WTO to strengthen the multilateral trading system and to contribute to efforts to reform the UN system, including the UN Security Council.



Commitment to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and COP outcomes was also reaffirmed. The statement also emphasizes the importance of Africa's energy transition.

A transition that will foster pathways to climate neutrality. Joint commitments were also made to work together to develop a new and ambitious WHO international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as an ambitious global framework for biodiversity.

The summit concluded with a commitment to regularly follow up and monitor, through existing AU-EU structures, including the AU-EU Ministerial Follow-up Committee, the implementation of the Joint Vision commitments.



Ph. [www.ispionline.it](http://www.ispionline.it)



Ph. <http://www.gcapitalia.it>



Ph. [www.qualenergia.it](http://www.qualenergia.it)

## 4. THE EU-AU STATEMENT: SOME COMMENTS

The goal of the summit was to lay a solid foundation to solve and guarantee the **stability, peace and sustainable development** of African countries, while also taking into consideration European interests. The final statement seeks to emphasize the intersectionality of priorities to achieve short-, medium- and long-term targets to address major challenges between the continents.

In line with the SDGs, some priorities have been put on the table, but critical points remain.

According to AMREF<sup>10</sup>, as of early April 2022, only 15.3% of Africa's population has been fully vaccinated, an extremely low percentage compared to that of the world population (58.04%), with Europe standing at 70.2%, the United States at 65.6%, and Italy at 84.%. And this is not only because of lack of vaccine availability, but also because of "supply issues". In fact, many of the doses sent to Africa -especially through the COVAX mechanism- expire months or even weeks after arrival in the destination country, making it difficult for governments and health workers to guarantee large-scale distribution.

As for **health cooperation**, what is still lacking is a long-term strategy from the EU and AU in terms of strengthening African health systems and how to develop real international cooperation to deal with the pandemic and other diseases striking the continent. In this regard, the final remarks are very ambiguous, especially considering the EU's opposition to the TRIPs waiver, and there still seems to be a lack of an organic plan to develop sustainable action for health systems.

Moreover, as far as the continent's development is concerned, **rapid industrialization** should also correspond to respect for the environment.

While the **green challenge** that is also investing Europe is far from being planned due to the unstable international scenario. The war in Ukraine is pushing the EU toward emergency measures to deal with energy shortages, while its Member States are signing new agreements with African governments to exploit fossil energy. Moreover, while renewable energy should be central to this new phase, the EU should acknowledge that *"more than 600m people live in the dark, our priority as Africans is clearly universal access to electricity and industrialisation"*<sup>11</sup>, as stressed by Macky Sall (President of Senegal). This means that in addition to green resources, the continent still needs "traditional" energy sources to continue its development and industrialization. These factors are slowing down the path of energy transition, weakening AU-EU resolutions and worsening the prospects of climate change affecting Africa's vulnerable populations.

In addition, the Horn of Africa, as well as West Africa and the Sahel, are witnessing new and old conflicts, such as Tigray and coups in Mali, Chad, Guinea, Sudan and Burkina Faso<sup>12</sup>. These countries did not attend the summit, leaving open and unresolved questions about peacebuilding opportunities. The solutions, as for **security, peace and stability**, despite good intentions did not correspond to effective measures.

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://www.amref.it/news-e-press/news-e-storie/faq-covid/> visited in May, 17, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://african.business/2022/02/trade-investment/will-eu-au-summit-reshape-europe-africa-relations/>

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://www.affarinternazionali.it/vertice-unione-europea-unione-africana/>

The militarization of security and the lack of a true peace process are the main critical points. For now, according to African Business<sup>13</sup>, the *“premised on the principle of African solutions to African problems”* approach has prevailed in the summit. This approach means that in many cases authoritarian rule and militarization of the political and social fabric are at the heart of maintaining security.

Tensions and wars also directly affect another crucial point at the summit: **migration**.

Indeed, increasing instability could provoke a new wave of migrants within African countries and to Europe. Although some cooperation policies were put on the table during the summit, again the old ‘approaches’ such as border externalization seem to be an anchored solution to manage migration. The positive aspects of migration are underrated. In addition, as for migration, the 150 billion investments mentioned should also cover educational and vocational training. In a long-term strategy, this should support the prevention of migration of young Africans and reinforce and increase the quality of education on the continent. However, as many have outlined<sup>14</sup>, all these renewed initiatives are characterized by a high level of bureaucratic procedures that, at least in the past, have turned aid from Europe into an empty box for African governments.

Indeed, many observers have pointed out that Europe’s previous initiatives in Africa have not produced the desired results<sup>15</sup>.

The summit, in this sense, was an attempt to re-connect and regain lost trust and to build a new cooperation for real development freed from the neo-colonial approach and a more horizontal level of relations or, as Shadia Islam outlined, *“if they want to make the upcoming summit different from their past attempts to reset relations, EU leaders will have to admit past failures while also correcting ongoing missteps”*<sup>16</sup>.

In this sense, African governments did not sign the annex (on effective actions established by the EU) to the AU-EU final statement, because it was not the fruit of a true partnership. The annex will be part of a new negotiation.

Finally, many civil society organizations in both Africa and Europe have pointed to the lack of effective involvement of local populations, social movements and indigenous peoples in the AU-EU political process<sup>17</sup>.

Despite rhetorical calls for peace and sustainable development, democracy and human rights have not been seen as fundamental pillars for AU-EU relations. A policy coherence approach to sustainable development is not applied, and many ambiguities and contradictions appear in AU-EU summit resolutions.

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://african.business/2022/02/trade-investment/will-eu-au-summit-reshape-europe-africa-relations/>

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://www.affarinternazionali.it/vertice-unione-europea-unione-africana/>

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://african.business/2022/02/trade-investment/will-eu-au-summit-reshape-europe-africa-relations/>

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://concordeurope.org/2022/02/14/joint-african-european-civil-society-statement-to-all-heads-of-states-and-government-dignitaries-attending-the-6th-eu-au-summit/>; <https://www.cidse.org/2022/02/16/african-peoples-summit-joint-declaration/>





*Volontari nel mondo.*



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