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HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY POLICY

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**JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE
COUNCIL**

A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific

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1. Introduction

The Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States on the one hand and, on the other hand, the European Union and its Member States, signed in Cotonou on June 2000¹ is due to expire in February 2020. Negotiations between the parties in order to examine provisions to govern relations subsequently have to start no later than August 2018.² The expiry of the Partnership Agreement, referred to as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA), covering over 100 countries with a total population of some 1.5 billion people, marks a strategic opportunity to rejuvenate the EU's relationship with its partners in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, taking into account the changed global context and focusing the partnership on common interests, objectives and shared responsibilities.

This Communication sets out the ideas and proposed building blocks for a political partnership with the ACP countries. It builds on the internationally agreed UN 2030 Agenda³, which provides a universal set of common objectives and on the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy,⁴ which provides strategic guidance on the EU's external interests and ambitions. The Communication is also coherent with the Commission proposal to revise the European Consensus on Development.⁵

The EU reaches out to partners, like-minded countries, and regional groupings in order to pursue common goals. The European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy are keen to invest in partnerships based on the principle of co-responsibility to make these true partnerships. This requires that partner countries engage positively and with similar ambitions.

The longstanding relationship with the ACP countries provides a good starting point to build a renewed political partnership. Partners on both sides would need to undertake significant changes in order to make their future relationship apt to the task in today's world and to forge a powerful alliance delivering on key priorities. In view of the priorities, the changed context, and lessons learned from the implementation of the CPA, a simple rollover of the CPA would not be able deliver. The Commission and the High Representative consider that an important shift of decision-making and implementation towards the regional levels will be required. Furthermore, future relations should link up ACP countries and neighbouring regions, which are not part of the current CPA, but play a key role in relation to achieving EU objectives.

In preparation of the process leading to the definition of the EU-ACP relations after 2020, the Commission and the High Representative initiated a process of reflection in 2015 through a

¹ 2007/483/EC OJ L 317, 15.12.2000

² Article 95.4 CPA

³ Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, United Nations A/RES/70/1

⁴ Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, 28 June 2016 <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/shared-vision-common-action-stronger-europe>

⁵ Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development, Communication (C(2016) 740 final)

public consultation.⁶ In addition, discussions were held with key stakeholders and an evaluation assessing the first 15 years of implementation of the CPA was published in July 2016.⁷ As part of the Impact Assessment⁸ accompanying this Communication, different options for the future relations have been examined. This work has formed the basis for this Communication.

2. Strategic EU interests

The global context has changed significantly since the start of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in 2000, following on from the Lomé Convention's legacy dating back to 1975. The expiry of the CPA is an opportunity to make the partnership fit for purpose in light of today's challenges in a changed world. Firstly, the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy has set the scene for stronger EU action in the world. The sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework under the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda⁹ have launched an ambitious and wide-ranging universal agenda for reform.

This comes at a time characterised by the persistent situations of fragility and vulnerability, the uneven progress within and between countries, and the rapidly growing negative effects of climate change and environmental degradation, which are undermining social and economic stability in various parts of the world. In particular, a high number of ACP States face significant problems related to conflicts, poverty, unemployment and lack of decent work, rising inequalities, human rights abuses, corruption, negative impacts of climate change, pressures on limited natural resources and degradation of ecosystems, as well as uneven integration into the global economy. Concentration of extreme and chronic poverty in fragile states remains a reality. Structural and recurring crises remain the source of severe humanitarian emergencies that are stretching the resilience of entire countries and societies. In addition, population growth is outpacing economic growth in many partner countries. All this hampers sustainable and inclusive growth and job creation needed to offer a positive perspective and genuine opportunities in life, in particular for the youth and the most vulnerable people.

This challenging environment provides a fertile ground for extremism, terrorism and other forms of organised crime, including human, drug and firearms trafficking as well as cybercrime. These patterns have negative spill-over effects on the security and economic prosperity of the EU and its citizens. It is also one of the root causes of irregular migration

⁶ The Joint Consultation Paper JOIN(2015) 33 and its outcomes are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/public-consultation-eu-acp-new-partnership_en

⁷ The Evaluation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement SWD(2016) 250 is available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/european-development-policy/acp-eu-partnership-after-2020_en

⁸ Impact Assessment Joint Staff Working Document JOIN(2016)380

⁹ http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf

and forced displacement. A clear framework is set by the European Agenda on Migration¹⁰, the jointly agreed Valletta Declaration and Action Plan of November 2015¹¹, and also by the Communication on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries¹² under the European Agenda on Migration.

The evaluation of the CPA shows that it has significantly contributed to the eradication of poverty and to improved and more equitable access to basic services. However, the picture is mixed as regards the respect of the essential elements (human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law) by ACP partners. In addition, convincing and common answers to critical challenges such as migration and mobility have not been provided.

At the same time, there has been significant economic growth in many ACP countries. Growing connectivity, interdependence, scientific and technological advances and intensified trade have opened up new possibilities for increased global prosperity. More and more ACP economies offer a growing range of opportunities in terms of returns on investment, also for European companies. The evaluation of the CPA shows that it has allowed for progress on the integration of partner countries into the world economy. There has been an increase of trade flows to and from ACP countries as well as their growing World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership and their increasing role in international trade negotiations. The conclusion and implementation of Economic Partnership Agreements have been important milestones. However, current state of play is unsatisfactory when it comes to increasing economic diversification, increasing value addition and reducing dependency on a narrow range of products, as well as redistribution of benefits leading to growing inequalities.

Another new reality that has emerged relates to the increased regional dynamics and the importance of regional organisations, and in the case of Africa, a continental organisation, the African Union. The evaluation of the CPA shows that it has not been able to address these important evolutions, which should be reflected in any future partnership decision making and institutional set-up.

Finally, partner countries play an increasingly critical role in addressing global challenges, which by definition cannot be addressed by the EU alone. In this regard, climate change remains one of the most pressing threats to the achievement of sustainable development in the EU and in the world. The rise of new powers, which do not always promote the same values and agendas, is a further argument to increase efforts to obtain consensus with the EU's partners on key issues of global concern and to drive a positive agenda forward together. Enhanced dialogue and cooperation with ACP countries is therefore critical if the EU aims to influence and foster a multilateral rules-based order. However, the evaluation shows that the partnership has not sufficiently delivered on these objectives. When it comes to results, there

¹⁰ COM(2015) 240 final, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/index_en.htm

¹¹ Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/12-valletta-final-docs/>

¹² COM(2016) 385 final, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_external_aspects_eam_towards_new_migration_ompact_en.pdf

has been a lack of responsiveness and real cooperation between partners on key international debates.

These challenges and opportunities are of such importance over the medium term that they require urgent decisive action with partners.

It is in the EU's interest to seek a new political partnership focussed on building peaceful, stable, well-governed, prosperous and resilient states and societies at its borders and beyond. A society that features democracy, trust in institutions and sustainable development is the basis for a resilient state.

It is also in the EU's interest to seek a new political partnership that delivers on the objective of a multilateral rules-based order addressing global challenges. Successful negotiations on the Paris Climate Change Agreement¹³ have shown that building such strategic alliances does positively affect outcomes in international negotiations.

To deliver on these EU interests, the EU's response strategy should focus on the following specific priorities that are interdependent and mutually reinforcing:

Specific priorities	
1	Promote peaceful and democratic societies, good governance, the rule of law and human rights for all
2	Spur inclusive sustainable growth and decent jobs for all
3	Turn mobility and migration into opportunities and address challenges together
4	Promote human development and dignity
5	Protect the environment and fight climate change
6	Join forces in the global arena on areas of common interests

The main building blocks for a future partnership are set out below.

3. A political partnership built on specific priorities

A first building block for a new political partnership should spell out commonly agreed objectives, values, principles, and commitments. Subsequently, these need to be tailored to the different regions, to reflect their specificities. Reaching out to other interested partners beyond the ACP countries should actively be explored (see section 4.2.3).

¹³ Paris agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/rev.1

3.1 EU priorities towards partner countries

3.1.1 Promoting peaceful and democratic societies, good governance, the rule of law and human rights for all

The future partnership should be based on a shared strong commitment to promote and respect democratic principles, the rule of law, universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for all; respect for human dignity and the principles of equality and solidarity; and good governance. In particular, attention to gender equality, the most vulnerable people and youth perspective should further inspire mutual efforts towards democratic governance and human rights for all. In many partner countries, these elements are already firm or are taking root. However, progress is insufficient to allow sustainable development efforts to take hold.

The EU promotes a rules-based global order to provide global public goods and contribute to a peaceful and sustainable world, with multilateralism as its key principle and the United Nations (UN) at its core. The partnership should therefore be based on the full respect of the principles of the UN Charter and international law, and should play an active role within this framework.

The partnership should promote peace, stability, and security, including human security and resilience, as a critical enabling condition for sustainable development and prosperity. There cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace. Fighting destabilisation and its root causes is also key for the EU's own security and prosperity. Security at home depends on peace beyond the EU's borders. In this regard, the future partnership should reflect the need for a comprehensive approach to conflict and crises, including prevention and resolution, addressing also military as well as civilian capabilities (and their interaction). It should take into account the multiple dimensions and acting at all stages of the conflict cycle, in close cooperation with continental and regional organisations, as well as the UN.

The partnership should focus on delivering the rule of law. This is a fundamental value, a necessary basis for sustainable development, a key component in preventing conflict, and a foundation for successful cooperation in other areas of interest for the EU. To deliver on this value, a clear commitment must be made notably to promote effective and independent justice for citizens and businesses. Addressing the impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern, including by acknowledging the complementarity of roles between the national criminal jurisdictions and the International Criminal Court in achieving justice and reconciliation, is also needed. The fight against corruption and organised crime is also essential to the effectiveness of democratic institutions, to a conducive business environment and to sustainable management of natural resources, including mineral resources.

The partnership should allow undertaking joint action in addressing increasingly global security threats affecting both Europe and partner countries, in particular terrorism and extremism as well as all forms of organised crime and illicit trafficking, including of human beings, wildlife, drugs and hazardous materials. It should also encompass the promotion of cyber security, the protection of critical infrastructure, as well as maritime and civil aviation

security. The partnership should equally strengthen the joint commitment to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including control of dual use items, and fight the illicit manufacture, transfer, circulation, excessive accumulation, and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons.

The partnership should foster effective action at all levels (local, national, regional, continental, and international) and it should ensure systematic engagement with all stakeholders on the respect of the principles and commitments made. The new partnership should build on the experience gained with political dialogue as a sound and flexible process for continuous, comprehensive, and broad engagement at all levels on all issues of interest. It should maintain the recourse to intensified political dialogue and include a consultation procedure on sensitive issues relating to the respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights for all and good governance, with the possibility of partial or full suspension of relations as a measure of last resort. The new partnership should facilitate increased engagement with a wide set of non-state actors, including civil society and private sector.

3.1.2 Promoting inclusive sustainable growth and decent jobs for all

Economic growth has been impressive in many partner countries over the last decade. Growth has often been fast, but from a low base, and economic diversification and sophistication are often weak in most countries. Most economies still remain very vulnerable to economic and natural shocks and do not provide for the necessary job creation. Furthermore, they are not yet transforming sufficiently towards an inclusive sustainable growth path, particularly in the field of sustainable consumption and production and resource efficiency. The integration of ACP countries in the global economy through increased trade and linking up into global value chains, has not reached the expected level. As reflected by the SDGs, creating inclusive sustainable growth and decent jobs is critical for the stability and prosperity for partners. It is important as well for the provision of positive spill-over effects towards the EU. Therefore, the partnership should particularly focus on key drivers for inclusive sustainable growth.

The promotion of macroeconomic stability, including financial system stability, remains a prerequisite for inclusive sustainable growth. This is particularly relevant in the context of an increasingly interconnected economic and financial world, with many emerging economies and related financial markets. Unsustainable fiscal and current account deficits, excessive fluctuations in exchange rates and inflation or high volatility in economic activity make it difficult for investors to plan and anticipate economic opportunities. Such a context impedes the implementation of coherent policies and effective budget management by the government.

The promotion of sound public finance management and efficient control of the use of public finance is critical in this regard. It includes the promotion of effective, efficient, fair and transparent tax systems and the fight against fraud and illicit financial flows. Sound public finance management is a key element of good governance and a key basis for an effective and resilient public sector. It should lead to increased domestic revenues being converted efficiently and effectively into public goods and services.

The new partnership should also promote a stronger role for the private sector in creating inclusive sustainable growth and jobs. This requires stronger action to improve the policy and regulatory framework, as well as the business climate. Particular attention should be given to the investment climate and addressing the need for increased investment.

The promotion of well-functioning labour markets should feature prominently in the new partnership. They are needed to ensure decent jobs for workers, including through transition from the informal to the formal economy and by improving labour conditions, health, and safety at work, and access to social protection.

Specific attention should be paid to a sustainable and environmental responsible agri-food sector. In partner countries, this sector remains a fundamental driver for sustainable development and in particular for food security, employment creation, and poverty eradication, while being particularly at risk from climate change.

This sustainable approach applies also to fisheries and aquaculture practices. Better global ocean governance is essential for boosting inclusive sustainable growth of maritime activities, while ensuring healthy, clean, and safe oceans. In this regard, the partnership should act to shape international ocean governance in the UN, as well as in other relevant multilateral fora. The common fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing should be strengthened.

The development of infrastructure, including sustainable transport and energy networks, is a key driver for inclusive sustainable growth, in particular of those infrastructure necessary to boost the regional economic integration, to access the world market, to unlock critically isolated areas and to facilitate mobility in dense urban areas. Specific attention should be paid to the development and dissemination of information and communication technologies, by providing affordable connectivity and wider access to digital applications for all, and the promotion of science and technology and research and innovation, being critical as well for economic investment and accelerated development.

The partnership should work towards providing universal access to clean, modern, affordable, secure and reliable energy services. Energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy solutions should be promoted, also in view of the impact on climate related global challenges.

In its quest for inclusive sustainable growth and job creation, the partnership should promote trade, which can be a powerful engine for economic development, contributing also to integration and political stability. Trade provides opportunities for EU and partner countries business to expand their markets and for people to access the best products at competitive prices.

Future trade relations with partner countries should be conducted in line with multilateral rules. WTO-compatible Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), with their joint institutions and binding, evolutionary commitments, should continue to be key instruments for ACP-EU trade. The existing EPAs can be widened to include more countries within the EPA regions and deepened to include more substantive areas, upon the parties' agreement.

Globalisation, the emergence of global value chains, and the growing importance of behind-the-border issues require addressing all trade and trade-related areas in a holistic manner. The new partnership should therefore strengthen the parties' cooperation and dialogue in trade in services and other trade-related areas, such as elimination of non-tariff barriers, regulatory harmonisation, investment, competition policy, intellectual property rights and labour rights.

While each EPA involves its own institutions to review the implementation and to discuss trade issues, a dialogue on trade matters and cooperation between the EU and the partner countries as a whole should continue to address issues of common interest, particularly in view of cooperation within the WTO. A policy dialogue on trade should also continue at national level, where appropriate.

3.1.3 Turning migration and mobility into opportunities and addressing challenges together

Migration and mobility can bring important benefits to the EU and partner countries, if properly managed. The CPA has been lacking sufficient rapid responsiveness and decisive action on this key challenge. The obligation of readmitting nationals in an irregular situation on the territory of the other party remained to a large extent unimplemented.

In the future, the partnership should enhance dialogue and cooperation between the parties, addressing all aspects of migration guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership, and shared responsibility and mutual accountability in respect of human rights. It should build on the agreed principles and commitments of Article 13 of the CPA, broaden them to reflect the full scope of migration developments and EU migration policy, and develop operational cooperation, particularly on enforcement mechanisms of agreed principles. It should integrate the important policy developments such as the European Agenda on Migration and related Partnership Framework which aim at helping to respond to crises through immediate and measurable results, but also lay the foundations of an enhanced cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination with a well-managed migration and mobility policy at its core. It should take into account as well the Valletta Summit Declaration and Action Plan. Partner countries will be supported in their efforts to develop effective migration and asylum policies. It is necessary to tackle the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement by applying sustained, short, medium-, and long-term policies, and to better use existing processes. The partnership should also engage on the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, with particular attention paid to vulnerable groups. It should promote the resilience of long-term forcibly displaced persons and their inclusion in the economic and social life of host countries.

The EU should seek specific commitments with partner countries to prevent and address more efficiently irregular migration, including the prevention and fight against trafficking in human beings, the smuggling of migrants and related criminal networks and raising awareness about the risks of irregular migration. Building on the principles and commitments of Article 13 CPA, it is necessary to agree on mechanisms to improve return and readmission cooperation and operational implementation of international obligations to readmit own citizens with no legal right to stay in the EU.

At the same time, it is necessary to harness the opportunities related to migration, such as remittances or 'brain circulation', which can provide an important positive contribution to inclusive sustainable growth and development in EU and partner countries. Therefore, the EU is committed to harness these opportunities through enhanced legal migration and mobility, especially for educational, scientific, cultural, training, and professional purposes, which can have a positive effect on economies and societies alike.

3.1.4 Ensuring human development and dignity

The partnership should work towards increased prosperity of its people by fulfilling the SDGs. The EU should seek a strong political engagement with partner countries in order to meet the needs of all, in particular among the poorest and most vulnerable, ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. It should support reforms to eradicate poverty, tackle inequalities, prevent vulnerabilities and ensure equitable access to decent work and social services, in particular quality education and health, and social protection. Actions towards poverty eradication should be focused on the poorest and most vulnerable countries including Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and fragile and conflict-affected countries, where difficulties are expected to persist compounded by demographic factors, and where a stronger focus on human development remains essential. The partnership should contribute to strengthen resilience, and address chronic vulnerability, by enhancing the synergies between life saving assistance and long term development needs.

The EU should insist on a joint commitment to fully protecting, promoting, and realising gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. The EU also wants to see a joint recognition of the key contribution of women and girls to peace and state-building, economic growth, technological development, poverty reduction, health and well-being, and culture and human development. Gender equality is important for sustainable development, as underlined in the 2030 agenda.

Young people are the engine for the future social, economic, and environmental well-being of their communities. Their contribution is essential to fully exploit the opportunities given by scientific and technological progress (e.g. digital revolution) and strengthen democratic institutions and values through time. Access to high quality and effective education and skills development will be crucial for employability, societal development, and resilience.

Furthermore, the partnership should take up a common commitment to foster inter-cultural dialogue, protect cultural diversity, and develop cultural and creative industries. Culture is a powerful tool to build bridges between people, notably the young, and reinforce mutual understanding. It is also an important mean to fight violent radicalisation and an engine for economic and social development.

3.1.5 Protecting the environment and tackling climate change

Sustainable development and human well-being depend on healthy ecosystems and a functioning environment. Climate change and environmental degradation, threaten to offset economic progress, jeopardise peace and stability and cause large-scale migration.

The partnership should therefore focus on reaching the relevant SDGs (e.g. clean energy, sustainable cities and communities and responsible consumption and production) and the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. It should enshrine a commitment to pro-poor climate resilience policies, and scale up the transformation to inclusive green and blue economies, in particular through the adoption of sustainable consumption and production practices by a responsible private sector. It should contain strong commitments on the sustainable management of natural resources including forests, wildlife and mineral resources, and the conservation, valuation and sustainable use of ecosystems and biodiversity, including oceans, and the implementation of mitigation and adaptation policies. Secure and fair access rights are also needed to achieve good stewardship of natural resources. Better preparedness, reduced exposure to vulnerability, and ability to recover from disasters are key to avoiding loss of lives and livelihoods.

The 2030 Agenda requires urgent efforts by all on global public goods, including low emissions and low-carbon economies. The new partnership should reflect the strong commitment of partners and their regional organisations to implement efficient sustainable energy policies that meet the greenhouse gas emission reduction objectives. Energy production has a direct link to the climate change challenge and sustainable development. The parties have vital interests to transform this sector, phasing out the use of fossil fuels while further mobilising the indigenous renewable resources and improving energy efficiency in partner countries, to leapfrog towards sustainable and modern energy services and to decouple economic growth from the growth in energy consumption. Furthermore, co-operation in this sector should promote high nuclear safety standards. To help ensure this, the EU should continue to work with partner countries to foster an enabling regulatory environment and sector reforms. The partnership should provide a more strategic and tailored approach to investment in sustainable energy, with an important role for private investments and modern technologies, to boost the transformation of energy production and consumption patterns across partner countries.

Sustainability also requires partners to commit to address the challenges of urban life, where the impact of a major population shift calls for a significant change towards smart and sustainable cities away from traditional urban policy-making.

3.1.6 Alliance on common challenges

The partnership should enable the EU and its partners to join forces more effectively to drive forward a common agenda in global and multilateral fora. The potential in this regard has barely been exploited and much more concrete results should be delivered. Cooperation in the international arena should be an area where a new partnership can provide a substantial added value.

The basis for stronger action is a renewed commitment to promote rules-based effective multilateralism, with the UN at its core. The partnership should support global governance by seeking to reform, implement, and develop multilateral institutions, agreements, and norms. Such a commitment to global governance must translate into increased dialogue and effective cooperation within international fora (including UNSC, UNGA, UNHRC, UNFCCC)¹⁴, as well as in the determination to reform the UN, including the Security Council.

Building on the experience of the high ambition coalition process that paved the way at COP 21¹⁵ for the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change¹⁶, the partnership must actively identify topics where the EU and partner countries have major common interests and could drive forward global action. This should translate into joint action at decision-making moments. A process should be defined to identify on a regular basis at the highest political level the common interests, allowing for a timely preparation and coordinated action and voting in the relevant international formats and frameworks. Areas to be considered include, among others: climate change, sustainable development, blue and green economy, protection of biodiversity, global digital economy, fight against illicit financial flows, and the proper functioning of commodity markets. The partnership should equally seek to further common interests at the WTO. There is also scope for closer cooperation in the international financial institutions.

In order to strengthen such strategic alliances in the international arena, the reaching out to countries beyond the ACP, in North Africa, among LDCs and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) should be promoted.

3.2. EU priorities tailored to the regions

The partnership priorities should be pursued everywhere. At the same time, to ensure effective implementation, the partnership should properly take into account the regional specificities and partners' own development frameworks and the different priorities of the EU's common agenda with partners in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. For each of the regions, the priorities can be tailored to the circumstances and fine-tuned by specifying the related objectives and actions that are envisaged.

3.2.1 Africa

Africa is a continent of immense opportunity. By 2050, it will be home to nearly 25% of world's population. It hosts some of the fastest growing economies in the world, as well as extensive natural and agricultural resources. It has huge potential for trade, innovation, and investments, and this is also what the continent aspires to. In most African countries, the EU is the first partner in politics, aid, trade, and investment. Over the past years, the EU and

¹⁴ United Nations Security Council, United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Human Rights Council, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

¹⁵ <http://www.cop21paris.org/about/cop21>

¹⁶ http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php

Africa have built a deeper, more political partnership based on shared values and interests. An increasing number of African governments and regional organisations are taking a lead role in addressing the political, security and economic challenges within their borders and beyond. The African Union and its Agenda 2063¹⁷ provide for an ambitious aspirational momentum.

Africa's potential will depend on African countries' efforts related to governance, human rights, conflict prevention and resolution, fight against organized crime, and inclusive sustainable growth and jobs creation. Various countries still lack the ability to reform and recover from crises. In other words, they lack resilience and suffer from fragility. Poverty, unemployment, and inequality remain high and the pace of reduction slow. Population growth adds a massive challenge to this all. Furthermore, many countries remain mired in long-term conflict, while transnational security challenges pose threats to regional stability and sustainable development. Environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change also threaten to offset economic progress and jeopardise peace and stability. All this fuels increased humanitarian emergencies, forced displacement flows and irregular migration, within the regions and towards Europe.

Boosting the opportunities and addressing the challenges is key for Africa's and the EU's security and prosperity. Therefore, taking into account the EU priorities and Africa's own commitments and reform agenda, as well as building on the basis laid down in the Joint Africa EU Strategy (JAES)¹⁸, the following objectives should be at the heart of a renewed partnership with African countries.

a. Peace and security, stability, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and human rights

Investing in African peace, stability, and development not only benefits our partners but is also an investment in the EU's own security and prosperity. Conflict and fragility remain a massive impediment to African development. In this regard, one has to reach out as well to non-ACP countries on key issues such as stabilisation, security and building resilience.

Specific objectives

- Promote an integrated approach to conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building and human security at national, regional, and continental levels, with increased African ownership, responsibility, solidarity, and capacities.
- Advance security, including maritime security, cooperation, and security sector reforms, through deepened security partnerships at country, regional and continental level and in close cooperation with the UN. The operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)¹⁹ is a key objective to achieve.

¹⁷ Agenda 2063 The future we want for Africa – agenda2063.au.int

¹⁸ The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership - A Joint Africa EU Strategy – www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/eas2007_joint_strategy_en.pdf

¹⁹ www.peaceau.org/en/page/104-african-peace-and-security-architecture-apsa

- Promote democracy and commit to respect for democratic principles, the constitution and the election cycle and results. In this regard, it will be important to have continued engagement with and support to the African Governance Architecture²⁰ and to democratic institutional development at local, national and regional level, in particular through the application of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance²¹. Furthermore, there should be a strengthened focus on facilitating, preserving, and broadening the space for civil society engagement in advocacy and policy shaping, as well as on supporting a stronger dialogue with local authorities.
- Promote the rule of law and good governance, including effective and independent justice for citizens and businesses. Sound public finance management remains a key element of good governance and a key basis for macro-economic stability and a resilient public sector.
- Promote and protect human rights, including by supporting the work of and taking forward dialogue with relevant human rights institutions from both continents, with relevant national institutions (e.g. national parliaments) as well as civil society and local authorities.
- Promote and protect humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law.
- Promote fight against organised and transnational crime, terrorism and radicalisation, and illicit trafficking in human beings, wildlife, drugs and hazardous materials and related illicit financial flows.

b. Mutual economic opportunities for sustainable development

Fostering inclusive sustainable growth will allow Africa to take advantage of its demographic evolution and turn it into an opportunity, with positive spill-over effects for the EU.

Specific objectives

- Promote decent employment opportunities, in particular for young people and women.
- Ensure an enabling environment for trade and responsible investment, private sector development, with a particular attention to the agri-food sector on which a majority of African's depend for their livelihoods.
- Promote the effective implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in Africa, in order for economic operators to reap the full benefits offered by the agreements.
- Make progress on: African regional integration, at continental and regional level, in line with Africa's Agenda 2063²² and the objectives set by the various regions, with a particular focus on trade facilitation, customs modernisation and standards harmonisation; regulatory coherence; and sustainable, efficient infrastructure that facilitates interoperability, inward investment and access to regional and global markets.

²⁰ Aga-platform.org

²¹ Au.int/en/treaties/African-charter-de;ocracy-elections-and-governance

²² <http://agenda2063.au.int/>

- Bolster new investment opportunities, including high quality investments that will leverage additional resources from capital markets, and promote partnerships between private operators on both continents and build on initiatives such as the EU-Africa Business Forum.
- Promote green and blue economy and environment-friendly models to foster inclusive sustainable growth and decouple it from environmental degradation, in particular by promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- In view of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy to power inclusive sustainable growth.

c. Migration and mobility management

To seize the benefits and manage the challenges of migration, a more coordinated, systematic and structured approach is required, matching the EU and African interests. Order in migration flows must be restored while facilitating mobility on the basis of a well-managed rights-based approach to migration, in line with the European Agenda on Migration and its new partnership framework with third countries, the 2014 EU-Africa Migration and Mobility Declaration, and the Valletta Summit Declaration and action plan.

Specific objectives

- Promote the conception and implementation of migration policies, through promoting regular channels and tackling irregular migration flows, including return and readmission.
- Better organise intra- and inter-regional labour mobility, facilitating institutional dialogue and cooperation along the migratory routes, and facilitating 'brain circulation' through recognition of skills and qualification, dialogue on visas, and promotion of students, researchers and academic mobility. Reduce the cost of remittances and enhance the role and engagement of the diaspora.
- Tackle irregular migration by putting in place adequate prevention measures, including the fight against human trafficking and smuggling of migrants through integrated border management and the promotion of alternatives to irregular migration.
- Address more effectively and efficiently return, readmission and reintegration challenges. Strong commitments on both sides with operational cooperation need to be made. In particular on readmission, the existing provisions of Article 13 of the Cotonou agreement need to be strengthened and made enforceable.
- Address forced displacement and promote international protection based on the principle of responsibility sharing, by helping preserve and enhance human capital of those forced to flee their homes, help ensure their protection and ultimately provide developmental benefits for the displaced and their hosts. This is valid for both populations fleeing their country and internally displaced people.

d. Human development

Poverty, poor skills development, and inequality remain great challenges, which improve only slowly. Strong population growth in Africa adds to this challenge.

Specific objectives

- Empower women, youth and vulnerable groups, by promoting equal access to quality education and vocational training, social protection, health including reproductive health care and representation in political and economic decision-making processes for women and girls and an enabling environment for youth to fulfil their potential, enjoy their human rights and engage as responsible actors.
- Tackle social and economic inequalities through fiscal, wage and social protection policies, including guaranteeing access to essential quality social services for all and promoting a nationally defined minimum level of income. Emphasis should be also put on ensuring food security, through increasing investment in rural infrastructure, agricultural research, technology development and social innovation.
- Promote knowledge development through providing quality education, including vocational education and training and skills development in line with labour market needs, and actively promoting the digital economy and society, science and technology, research and innovation, in order to significantly improve the lives of people and the employability of the local workforce in a sustainable manner in both urban centres and rural areas.
- Address vulnerability to macroeconomic and other shocks such as health threats and outbreaks, strengthen health systems to pursue universal health coverage and quality care; and prevent and reduce the burden of, disease, poor nutrition, food shortages, natural disasters and climate change.
- Increase access to drinking water and sanitation and promote the availability and the sustainable management of water resources and prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Advance the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems and natural resources and the implementation of nature-based solutions.
- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

3.2.2 Caribbean

The EU and the Caribbean share a long history, culture and a broad base of common values. Through its outermost regions, and associated overseas countries and territories (OCTs), the EU is also physically part of the Caribbean. Caribbean countries share a number of EU political objectives and face a number of challenges which the EU has an interest in addressing (such as climate change, crime and other security challenges, environmental preservation), some of which offer opportunities for market access (e.g. sustainable energy).

Taking into account the EU priorities and the specific context, as well as building on the basis laid down in the joint EU-Caribbean strategic partnership, the following objectives should be at the heart for a renewed partnership with Caribbean countries.

a. Peace and human security, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and human rights

The Caribbean is a stable region where most countries feature well-functioning democracies, although good governance and the respect of human rights are uneven. Protection and promotion of human rights and democratic practices is key for the region's stability and prosperity. It is also important in view of the number of associated overseas countries and territories and of the EU outermost regions. The Caribbean is also located geographically on the drug routes to North America and Europe. The fight against transnational crime and terrorism financing, against tax avoidance and money laundering practices and need for increased financial transparency, are key challenges for both regions.

Specific objectives

- Consolidate the functioning of democratic institutions and enhance the rule of law, access to effective and independent justice, and human security. This needs to be complemented by a preventive approach focussing on addressing root causes including poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, and impunity.
- Improve the protection and promotion of human rights for all. The focus should be on promoting gender equality and indigenous rights, on combatting domestic violence, child abuse and corporal punishment, human trafficking and discrimination against minorities, on improving prison conditions and police behaviour, as well as on addressing the death penalty issue.
- Promote good economic governance including sound public finance management, transparency, and accountability. This includes strengthening the fight against corruption, money laundering, and illicit financial flows and tax havens.

b. Regional integration, inclusive sustainable growth, trade and job creation

All countries, except Haiti, have transitioned to a status of middle to high-income. Nevertheless, the economies are generally characterised by narrow domestic markets, high level of debts, an undiversified productive base, which limit their resilience to external shocks.

Specific objectives

- Make further progress on regional integration and cooperation initiatives and policies, including the development of infrastructure networks and interconnectivity to facilitate intra-regional and international trade and mobility.
- Prioritise job creation and harness private sector investments by creating a favourable business environment, enhancing regional integration and international

competitiveness, promoting corporate social responsibility and best business practices, including digitalisation, and supporting the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including in the social and solidarity economy.

- Promote the effective implementation of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement, in order for economic operators to reap the full benefits offered by the agreement.
- Strengthen wider regional and south-south initiatives with Latin America and with the EU outermost regions and associated OCTs in order to facilitate closer hemispheric cooperation and trade.

c. Human development

Human development indicators have improved in most Caribbean countries over the last decades. Despite these positive developments, poverty and extreme poverty in Caribbean countries, particularly in Haiti, persists. This is linked to extreme social and economic inequalities.

Specific objectives

- Undertake efforts at all levels in view of eradicating poverty, tackling inequalities and promoting decent work for all.
- Promote access for all to quality health and social services, including universal health coverage, increase cooperation in the area of education, life-long learning, workforce and training with a view to develop adequate skills for the labour market and prevent brain drain.
- Improve food security and nutrition and promote sustainable value-added agriculture and agro-industry, with a focus on smallholder farmers, as a way to diversify Caribbean economies and avoid that small producers lose their livelihoods.

d. Climate change and sustainable management of natural resources

Caribbean countries are all SIDS characterised by low-lying coastal territories, highly exposed to natural disasters including earthquakes, hurricanes, and the impact of climate change, including rising sea levels caused by climate change. Being highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and having at the same time a narrow economic base, they lack the resilience to cope with the rising impacts of natural disasters, biodiversity degradation, or water scarcity. Caribbean islands are also heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels while they have abundant natural resources and opportunities to develop renewable energy sources.

Specific objectives

- Facilitate dialogue and common approaches in order to strengthen resilience and capacity of the Caribbean region to mitigate and adapt to the consequences of, and threat posed by, climate change and disasters, including in the area of disaster risk reduction.

- In view of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, enhance the development of renewable power generation and energy efficiency measures through transfer of best practices and promotion of investment opportunities in clean energy infrastructure and technologies.
- Support the implementation of policies that contribute to creating a green and blue economy and encourage sustainable production and consumption patterns.
- Protect and restore land and marine biodiversity and coastal ecosystems for the preservation of biodiversity, as well as the sustainable use of its natural resources, including through nature-based solutions and ecosystem services.
- Enhance cooperation in the area of water resources management, including providing access to safe water, sanitation and increase water use efficiency; improve waste management systems, recycling and re-use.

3.2.3 Pacific

The EU and the Pacific share a long history, strong current ties, and a broad base of common values. Beyond these bilateral ties, the large number of island nations and their huge maritime territories make the Pacific an important player for the EU in tackling global challenges. Pacific countries and territories share some major challenges, particularly with respect to their vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change, as well as some general development objectives linked to their small size and geographic isolation.

The Pacific is home to about 500,000 EU citizens (around 5% of the total population of the Pacific). Besides supporting OCTs worldwide, the EU supports the integration of OCTs within the Pacific region, with a view to maximising their potential contribution to the sustainable development of their region and also to benefit from regional integration. New Caledonia and French Polynesia were admitted in September 2016 as members to the Pacific Island Forum, the main regional political body for the Pacific.

Taking into account the EU priorities and the specific context, as well as building on the basis laid down in the EU strategy for a strengthened partnership with the Pacific, the objectives below should be at the heart for a renewed partnership with Pacific countries. In addition to these specific objectives, the renewed EU Pacific partnership should recognise and support Pacific countries' efforts regarding regional integration, not only within the Pacific region itself but also – where aimed for by individual countries – into the Asia-Pacific region, notably with ASEAN as well as helping Pacific countries deal with security challenges that may emerge over the coming decades .

a. Good governance, human rights and gender

Notwithstanding substantial progress made over recent decades, remaining weaknesses in terms of good governance at national and regional level and the need for further progress in protection of human rights and gender equality, is holding back the regions' development.

Specific objectives

- Ensure ratification and implementation of core UN human rights conventions, bearing in mind that the limited implementation of relevant conventions is often due to the lack of adequate administrative structures rather than of political will.
- Promote the effective protection of human rights, with a focus on fighting gender-based violence and the promotion of children's rights, through advocacy and education interventions.
- Promote good governance including sound public finance management, transparency and accountability, addressing also emerging challenges such as tax havens and money laundering. Contribute to further consolidate the rule of law and access to effective and independent justice.
- Strengthen the role of civil society organisations, particularly in the promotion of fundamental values and improving gender equality.
- Enhance policy and political dialogue implementation with results at local, national and regional level.

b. Inclusive sustainable growth

The Pacific region comprises of large exclusive economic zones, with vast maritime resources. About one third of tuna globally is fished in the Pacific. While a modest actor in Pacific tuna fishing, the EU remains the largest fisheries consumer in the world. The EU is a very important export market, particularly for the Pacific fisheries products. For these reasons, the EU has an interest to bring forward the international fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in the region, to maintain healthy fish stocks for future generations.

Oceanic resources, however, are not limited to fisheries. There are great opportunities in sustainable blue and green economy development. The EU has an interest in improving ocean governance to ensure the sustainable use of oceanic resources²³.

Furthermore, other parts of the private sector, such as tourism, should be developed as to provide inclusive sustainable growth and job opportunities.

Specific objectives

- Ensure the effective implementation of Economic Partnership Agreements with countries in the regions applying it.
- Enhance private sector development, in particular SMEs and improve conditions for investment.

²³ Joint Communication on International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans - http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/join-2016-49_en.pdf

- Strengthen regional, national and local initiatives promoting sustainable fishing and the implementation and respect of the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea²⁴, and its implementing agreements, and of other relevant international conventions. Develop and promote ocean governance and foster blue and green economy initiatives as the safe exploitation of deep-sea mining involving all stakeholders concerned.
- Promote decent employment opportunities, in particular for young people and women.

c. Climate change and sustainable management of natural resources

Climate change is a central concern for both the EU and the Pacific partner countries and territories.

Specific objectives

- Improve preparation for and recovery from natural disasters, such as tropical cyclones, to build up resilience against these occurrences.
- In view of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, enhance the development of renewable energy generation and energy efficiency measures through transfer of best practices, including in the area of maritime transport, and the promotion of investment opportunities in clean energy infrastructure and technologies.
- Support the implementation of policies that contribute to creating a green economy (e.g. through sustainable rural development and climate change resilient agriculture and forestry) and encourage sustainable production and consumption patterns.
- Enhance environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources, including in waste management and in water, sanitation and health.
- Protect and restore land and marine biodiversity and coastal ecosystems for the preservation of biodiversity, as well as the sustainable use of its natural resources and ecosystem services.

4. A more targeted and flexible partnership

To deliver on the strategic interests, the EU must define how to further improve the way in which the relations with its partners in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific should be organised and governed. This building block for a political partnership touches upon many aspects, which will require extensive consultations with partner countries as well. It concerns the format of the relations, the actors to be involved and the principles on which to base

²⁴ UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, 10 December 1982 available at: http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm

cooperation, the mechanisms needed to deliver better, as well as the appropriate institutional set-up and legal status in support of the implementation of the partnership. In this regard, there are important lessons learned from the CPA that need to be taken into account.

4.1 Lessons learned

The evaluation of the CPA²⁵ underlines a number of strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation points to progress on poverty eradication and human development in ACP countries, to increased trade flows, to the strengthening of peace and security and the reinforcement of democracy and human rights. However, important efforts are still needed, not least because some of these achievements are under threat by the emergence of new sources of instability (e.g. demographic boom, authoritarian governments and terrorism, and climate change).

Political dialogue (Article 8 CPA) and consultations / appropriate measures (Article 96 CPA) have proven to be useful tools, even if the full potential has remained partially untapped. Mixed results have been achieved in different domains, including: human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law (Article 9), migration (Article 13) and involvement of state and non-state actors (Article 6).

Furthermore, the evaluation points to the fact that the CPA has not been able to sufficiently capture the intensification of regional dynamics and the growing heterogeneity of partner countries as e.g. between those most in need (LDCs, fragile countries), as well as those of more advanced countries (Middle Income Countries, etc.). The regional and continental organisations established by partner countries are gradually emerging as regional actors that encompass political and security as well as trade and development mandates.

The evaluation underlines also that the current institutional set-up and its functioning, as well as some operational processes, show important inefficiencies.

Finally, cooperation between the EU and its partners in multilateral fora has hardly been used. It was only introduced in the 2010 revision of the CPA and led to positive outcomes in particular on the Paris Agreement on climate change negotiations, but most often, the partnership was not able to use all its weight to influence the outcome. Progress in this field will require the partner countries to demonstrate their commitment to the objectives they have set themselves at the ACP Port Moresby Summit.²⁶ It also calls for the EU to seek ways of creating flexibility to build alliances including ACP and non-ACP States, such as all LDCs or SIDS.

²⁵ Joint Staff Working Document: Evaluation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (SWD(2016) 250 final)

²⁶ <http://www.acp.int/content/declaration-8th-summit-acp-heads-state-and-government-acp-group-states>

4.2 A flexible partnership built on a strong regional approach

In view of creating a relationship built on common priorities that take into account the evolved context and lessons learned, various options for the future format have been analysed and assessed in an impact assessment²⁷ (see Annex I).

4.2.1 The options

The options range from letting the CPA expire without replacing it, to replacing the current Agreement with a new one but with limited change. The latter would obviously fail to address the serious weaknesses in the existing Agreement. The former option may entail more costs than benefits, as it would abandon the positive *acquis* of a 40 year old partnership and would weaken the EU's role at the global level. A partnership with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries is in itself not questioned. However some stakeholders do criticise its current approach, content and format.

Three other options have been assessed more in detail:

(1) A substantially revised partnership with the partner countries. This option would reflect the developments since the second revision of the CPA took place in 2010, but would not provide the needed policy coherence with the more recent regional strategies and would not reflect adequately the growing importance of the continental (African Union), regional and sub-regional level;

(2) A full regionalisation of the relations with partner countries, through three separate regional partnerships (with Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific). This option would fully reflect the continental and regional dimension but would fail to respond to the willingness of the partner countries to have a renewed partnership with the EU and would make it less evident to forge alliances in global *fora* (such as the UNFCCC or the WTO);

(3) A third alternative takes the form of one agreement with the partner countries, consisting of three distinct regional partnerships with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, with an opening for a closer involvement of other countries, under a common umbrella. The umbrella would define the common values, principles, essential elements, and interests that underpin the cooperation between the parties, building on the significant *acquis* of the CPA. It would also include specific mechanisms for cooperation on the global agenda. The three regional partnerships would build on and integrate existing ones (e.g. Joint Africa EU Strategy) and set the priorities and actions focussed on the specificities of the agenda of the partnership with each of the three regions. This will allow the EU and partner countries to set initiatives at the most appropriate level.

²⁷ Joint Staff Working Document: Impact Assessment on future relations with ACP countries after 2020 (SWD(2016) xxx).

4.2.2 The proposed option

The third option would allow to better tackle issues at the right level and in the right setting, on the basis of the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity, while acknowledging that many of today's global sustainability challenges require action bridging individual regions. This is in line with the fact that the bulk of EU engagement is already now at national level, followed by regional and only then ACP level. While interests towards Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific span a number of issues, which would benefit from joint engagement, there are also specific interests to develop on a differentiated basis. The African Union, but also regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern Africa Development Community or the East African Community are relevant players, as are other regional organisations such as CARICOM/CARIFORUM in the Caribbean.

At the same time, the umbrella partnership would avoid the cost of refusing any partnership with the partner countries as a group and could preserve the Cotonou *acquis*, notably when it comes to essential elements and the link with Economic Partnership Agreements. These are identical for the three regions, and thus provide significant economies of scale to negotiate and manage jointly these aspects rather than separately with different groupings or countries. It allows developing cooperation at the international level on key common global challenges, too. The weight of the alliance can be substantial as reflected by the role played towards conclusion of the Paris Agreement.

Taking into account all these elements, the proposed new format enables the preservation of all the valuable elements of the current CPA, but most importantly puts the right conditions in place for the EU to meet its new objectives.

4.2.3 Outreach beyond ACP countries

The umbrella option also permits best to involve interested countries beyond ACP in order to ensure coherence in particular with respect to the pan-African dimension (e.g. between the ACP-EU Partnership and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy). This is important, as it would allow the EU to align, where needed, the geographical scope for engagement with specific objectives for a specific group of countries and will add diplomatic capital to the EU for a more strategic pursuit of its interests. In this regard, the involvement of the non-ACP countries in North Africa, the few non-ACP members of the group of LDCs and of the group of SIDS is particularly important. Relevant non-ACP countries should be more closely involved, while at the same time ensuring coherence with existing policy frameworks (e.g. European neighbourhood policy) and already existing association agreements.

4.3 A multi-level, multi-stakeholders partnership with key principles for cooperation

The partnership should be based on a series of principles. It should be delivered through a multi-level system of governance that allows taking actions at the most appropriate level, in line with the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity, as well as differentiation and

regionalisation. The partnership should also build on a multi-stakeholder approach, going beyond governments which cannot handle the challenges alone.

4.3.1 Fundamental principles for cooperation

The new partnership should be underpinned by the following fundamental principles:

- dialogue;
- mutual accountability;
- broad participation of state and non-state actors;
- ownership.

4.3.2 Subsidiarity and complementarity principles

The partnership should reflect and integrate the regional dynamics across Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. It should do so by ensuring that political engagement and decision-making takes place at the most relevant level of responsibility, be it national, regional, continental or ACP-wide.

4.3.3 Actors

As pointed out in the public consultation and the evaluation, the multi-stakeholder dimension of the partnership is recognised but deserves to be strengthened. It should reach out to a range of actors, both state and non-state actors. A new partnership should reinforce their respective roles. These include:

- State actors: national governments, parliaments and regional and local authorities;
- Regional organisations (including African Union);
- Non-ACP countries, and
- Non-state actors, including civil society, economic and social partners and the private sector.

4.4 A partnership that delivers better

The partnership has to define appropriate means and tools that allow delivering most efficiently on the set priorities. This has to be fully aligned with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which is part of the 2030 Agenda, the elaboration of a new European Consensus on Development, the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and the recommendations emerging from the CPA evaluation.

4.4.1 Diversified partnership

The partnership should apply differentiated implementation methods in line with the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the EU Global Strategy and the European Consensus on Development.²⁸

4.4.2 Means of implementation

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda sets out a new paradigm and provides a framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda, through financial and non-financial means. It should be at the heart of the partnership. It includes domestic action, enabling policy frameworks and the role of a vibrant private sector, all underpinned by a supportive international environment.

Partner countries should concentrate efforts on addressing existing gaps on domestic public finances, including improved domestic resource mobilisation; more effective and efficient public expenditure; and debt management. Fair, transparent, efficient, and effective tax systems and public expenditure frameworks should be promoted. Particular attention should be given to tackling tax avoidance, tax evasion, and illicit financial flows.

The EU should look forward to combined modalities and tools that have shown high performance, while keeping a high level of flexibility to be able to adapt to further improvements. This should be in line with the development effectiveness principles (including ownership, transparency, mutual accountability and focus on results) and should be further supported by the implementation of policy coherence for development (PCD).

4.5 A partnership supported by the right institutional set-up

The institutional set-up should reflect the political nature of the partnership, the priorities set, the format chosen, the ways of cooperating and the different actors involved. It should enable decisions and actions to be taken quickly and effectively. The present system based on joint institutions has proven to be useful to share experiences but it is now outdated since it is too heavy and cumbersome. It is too early to define the institutional set-up seen at this stage, but a number of principles defining its design can be put forward.

As a political partnership based on mutual responsibilities and supported by rules, it should be implemented through a multi-layered and flexible institutional architecture that promotes and facilitates dialogue on issues of common concern. It should use the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity to define engagement with relevant institutional and non-institutional actors at different levels.

Dialogue and cooperation at all levels should focus on the format that would best serve specific objectives and interests, with those countries and regional organisations or cooperative frameworks that perform best in a given area.

²⁸ Placeholder for Consensus Communication xxxx

4.6 A partnership supported by a legal framework

The legal status of the future partnership plays an important role for its implementation, as confirmed by the analysis made in the Impact Assessment annexed to this Communication. It is therefore in the EU's political interest to reaffirm its longstanding commitment by anchoring the new partnership in a legally-binding agreement. At the same time, the new partnership should remain flexible and agile to adapt to its own progress and the ever-changing environment. This is particularly relevant for the regional pillars. These are the basic principles on which the legal status of a future partnership should be based and fine-tuned when the final priorities and main characteristics of the partnership are fully known.

4.7 Next steps

The Communication will be the basis for discussions with the Council and the Parliament, as well as broader stakeholders including ACP partners, in view of the preparation of a recommendation with negotiating directives.