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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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Subject: Africa
- Council conclusions (30 June 2020)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on Africa, adopted by written procedure on 30 June 2020.

Council conclusions on Africa

I. A stronger EU-Africa partnership

Africa and Europe are natural partners bound by history, geography and culture. The EU and the African Union (AU) enjoy a unique partnership, built on common values and a shared commitment to regional integration and effective multilateralism.

A prosperous, peaceful and resilient Africa is an essential EU foreign policy objective. The EU is Africa's leading partner in trade and investment, security, energy, green transition, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, as well as in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The EU is determined to strengthen this relationship with the African states and the AU, and to build a stronger political partnership, based on mutual interests and commitments, reciprocity, shared responsibility and joint action, and which is responsive both to European and African aspirations. The Joint Communication *Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa* constitutes an excellent basis on which to initiate a new ambitious partnership with Africa. The next EU-AU Summit will be a pivotal moment for renewing a comprehensive joint strategic approach that delivers on these aspirations.

It is strongly in the interest of the EU to develop an even closer partnership with Africa regarding:

- multilateralism. Both African and European voices are key to the promotion of the international rules-based order, human rights, the rule of law and democracy;
- peace, security and stability. A peaceful and resilient African continent also directly benefits Europe;
- sustainable and inclusive development. Global challenges, such as climate change, green transition, protection of the environment, conservation of biodiversity, global health and gender equality, require urgent collective action;

- sustainable economic growth. Trade and investment between Europe and Africa can create sustainable jobs and growth on both continents.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated the need for a global response and a strong EU-Africa partnership. Recovery is an opportunity to build back better, greener and more resilient societies. The EU commends the swift reaction of the AU in addressing the crisis. Under the ‘Team Europe’ approach, the EU collectively stands with African partners to support the ongoing humanitarian response, including through the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge initiative, and to mitigate socio-economic impacts, particularly supporting the least developed countries and fragile states. The EU is working with all its African partners to strengthen African public health, water and sanitation systems, preparedness and response capacities. Among other things, this includes promoting the African pharmaceutical and medical industry, as well as cooperation on innovation and research on endemic infectious diseases. Given the broad experience of African states in containing pandemics, knowledge-sharing and cooperation, including on global health, can be beneficial for both. The EU will support the ‘Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator’ to ensure an equitable allocation of tests, treatments and vaccines at an affordable price as they become available. Debt service suspension, as promoted by the G7, the G20 and the Paris Club, represents another important step towards alleviating pressure and allowing for a more rapid response, and should be implemented swiftly by all actors. The EU also reiterates its call for coordinated international debt relief efforts.

II. Ambitious priorities

The EU values its long-term engagement with African partners. The EU’s programmes and investments are based on dialogue, transparency, reliability, quality, sustainability and ownership. The Council has the following priorities for the next phase of the EU partnership with Africa:

- i) **Multilateralism and the rules-based international order:** working together, the EU and Africa can have a greater impact on the global agenda. Ensuring effective multilateralism with the UN at its core is a cornerstone of the EU's external policy. The EU seeks to deepen its partnership with Africa to promote, adapt, and, where needed, reform the multilateral system. To that end, the EU wishes to further intensify cooperation and coordination within multilateral fora with its African partners. The EU recommits to working with Africa to ensure respect for all human rights and other international legal obligations worldwide, and to promoting an open, rules-based multilateral trading system, notably through WTO reform.
- ii) **Democracy, good governance, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality** and inclusive and participative societies are preconditions for peace, stability, sustainable development and leaving no one behind, both in Africa and the EU. The EU wishes to enhance its dialogue with Africa in order to strengthen these values and principles. In this regard, the EU will keep partnering with the AU in the efforts to take forward the African Governance Architecture. The participation of civil society and young people in building sustainable, inclusive and peaceful societies is essential. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, their full enjoyment of all human rights, the elimination of all forms of discrimination and exclusion, and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and full and meaningful participation of women and girls are fundamental for sustainable development, economic growth, peace and security. The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.

iii) **Peace, security and stability:** recognising that Africa has primary responsibility for promoting peace and stability on the continent, reaffirmed by the ‘Silencing the guns’ initiative, the EU is stepping up its support to African efforts such as the African Peace and Security Architecture. The AU-EU Memorandum of Understanding on Peace, Security and Governance restates the linkages between security, good governance and the rule of law, as well as conflict prevention and resolution. The EU places a particular focus on promoting and ensuring respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, including principled humanitarian access. The EU supports a human rights-based integrated approach, which includes addressing the root causes of instability and acting at all stages of the conflict. The EU will continue to provide assistance to African-led peace support operations. It remains committed to strengthening the capacity of African partners through security cooperation, including military, crisis management, training, equipment and funding, respecting national legal and constitutional obligations. The EU is ready to strengthen its collaboration with Africa on tackling terrorism, violent extremism, maritime crime and piracy, illicit flows of weapons and financial assets, trafficking, forced displacement, cyber-crime and disinformation. The EU will continue to work with Africa on deepening UN-AU-EU cooperation. The EU reiterates its support for the UN agendas on Women, Peace and Security, Youth, Peace and Security, and Protection of Civilians, and the safeguarding of the rights of the child in situations of armed conflicts. The EU supports the UN Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire.

- iv) Trade and investment:** as neighbouring continents, sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Europe and Africa is mutually beneficial. The devastating impact of COVID-19 on the African economies accentuates the need for sustainable investment and trade, and for a stronger private sector. The EU is ready to further accompany the economic diversification and industrial transformation of the African continent. Reciprocal and intra-African investments should be encouraged, particularly in the structuring of production chains. The Economic Partnership Agreements, and other EU trade agreements with African partners, are among the means through which mutual economic growth can be achieved. The EU commends the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which has the potential to boost intra-African trade and promote sustainable growth and decent jobs, and which could lead in the long run to a comprehensive continent-to-continent free trade agreement. The EU supports AfCFTA implementation, and is ready to share its expertise. Strengthening EU-Africa economic and trade relations also requires continued dialogue on the business environment and investment climate, including an level economic playing field, norms and standards, the protection of intellectual and industrial property, sound public financial management, tackling corruption and fight against illicit financial flows and tax avoidance and evasion. There is a mutual interest in investing in sustainable connectivity systems, agriculture, fisheries and forest management. Increased cooperation in research and science, technology and innovation would be integral to all these objectives.
- v) Investing in people:** the EU will keep investing in people and empowering them, in particular young people, women and girls, in support of sustainable growth and in order to harness the demographic dividend. This requires increased efforts to eradicate poverty and growing socio-economic inequalities and to strengthen resilience, particularly among the most vulnerable. Ensuring access to inclusive and equitable quality education for all, including higher education and vocational training that responds to the needs of local markets, is a prerequisite for the future prospects of young people. There should be a particular emphasis where the need is greatest and where the most impact can be had, especially in Least Developed Countries and in situations of fragility and conflict. The EU also stresses the need to address the diversity of situations and specific challenges of countries that graduate from low-income to middle-income status.

- vi) Green transition:** climate change and environmental degradation require collective action. The EU and Africa are crucial allies in supporting the Paris Agreement and its full implementation, in promoting a greater level of ambition in climate action, and in transitioning financial flows. Enhanced coordination leading up to the next year's UN Climate Change Conference (COP-26) would be instrumental in achieving this essential global objective. The EU stands ready to continue its support for the implementation of short- and long-term strategies for reducing emissions and for the development of national adaptation plans. An enhanced and green EU-Africa partnership in areas such as clean and renewable energy, energy efficiency, water management, transport systems and other green investments has great potential to create economic growth and jobs on both our continents. The EU seeks to step up its cooperation with Africa in managing an inclusive and just transition aiming at climate neutrality and circular economy, as well as sustainable management of natural resources. Taking into account specific vulnerabilities and capacities, the EU wishes to develop innovative solutions together with Africa in order to address resources scarcity, loss of biodiversity, desertification and adaptation to climate change. Jointly, the EU and Africa can better promote sustainable oceans governance. The EU and Africa can further address water related challenges, promoting the role of water as a key building block for social and economic resilience, especially in the context of food and nutrition security.
- vii) Digital:** the EU wishes to pursue jointly with Africa a vision of an inclusive digital economy and society that is based on common principles. The EU supports Africa's ambition for digital transformation and its efforts to develop new African-made solutions to boost the digital economy. Together with relevant stakeholders from the public and private sector, civil society and academia, the EU and Africa can address shared opportunities and challenges in building a digital future. This includes cooperating on cyber security and democratic integrity, closing the digital divide, fighting data poverty, participating in digital trade, promoting digital for development, enhancing digital skills and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms online. The EU and Africa can also cooperate on e-governance solutions to help strengthen the efficiency, accountability and accessibility of government services.

- viii) Human dimension:** at the core of the EU-Africa multi-stakeholder partnership is a people-centred approach that values the benefits of people-to-people ties, relations with local actors, and ensures the active participation of civil society. The role of diasporas, in Europe and in Africa, is key to promoting dialogue and a better inter-cultural mutual understanding. Further potential lies in the scaling-up of exchange programmes, student and researchers' mobility, educational and scientific partnerships, scholarships, connectivity, twinning activities and the promotion of cultural exchanges, intercultural dialogue and linguistic diversity. The EU is committed to fighting all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, inside and outside its borders.
- ix) Migration and mobility,** both within and between the two continents, present opportunities and challenges. They require a balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach, guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility, in accordance with EU and national competences, and respecting international law, including human rights. Strengthened EU-Africa cooperation is needed to tackle the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration, to enhance protection capacities in the region, to prevent irregular migration, to fight migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks, to facilitate readmission, return and reintegration, to ensure international protection, and to use legal pathways of migration. Dialogues on migration and mobility at continental, regional and bilateral level should, where relevant, further address both intracontinental and intercontinental aspects. It is the EU's view that the cost of remittances should be further reduced.

III. Towards a joint strategy based on common objectives

The coming months will be important for the future of EU-Africa relations. The upcoming high-level continent-to-continent meetings provide an opportunity to jointly work towards a renewed partnership based on reciprocity, shared interests and common values. The EU and its African partners will have to ensure coherence with existing and future agreements, including the future successor to the Cotonou agreement. In order to provide an equal basis for upcoming preparations, the EU would welcome an initiative from its African partners that outlines their interests and expectations for the future partnership. The EU looks forward to stepping up an open and inclusive exchange with citizens, civil society, diaspora, young people, the private sector and top-level thinkers and decision-makers from both continents. It looks forward to working with African authorities, both during the upcoming AU-EU Ministerial Meeting and on other occasions, towards the adoption of joint, ambitious and concrete initiatives that will make the EU-AU Summit in October a milestone on the path to a deeper and stronger partnership, living up to the European and African aspirations.
