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High Level Conference on ESDP, Crisis Prevention & Conflict Resolution in Africa

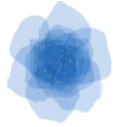
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Introduction

- The main objectives of the conference were to promote a debate between different representatives involved in the prevention of crisis and conflicts resolution, such as academics, politicians, officials and soldiers, both European and African. The conference also aimed to help deepen the relationship between EU and Africa on Security and Defence issues, which is a priority for the Portuguese presidency as well as for the EU.
- The strengthening of the EU-Africa relationship and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals depend on many things, such as poverty reduction, the eradication of pandemics, gender equality; and more broadly respect for human rights and democratic principles, plus the promotion of good governance and the rule of law. However, to fulfil those objectives, the EU and Africa have to establish and develop a Strategic Partnership to face common security challenges.
- The EU has already played an important role in conflict prevention, management and resolution missions in Africa, namely in RD Congo. In post-conflict situations, Security Sector Reform – as a way to develop the Armed Forces, intelligence services and the judiciary system – is the first step for effective state-building. Disarmament, demobilisation and the re-integration process of ex-combatants, are also fundamental in this context.

1. Session I: Facing African security challenges – are European and African interests and responsibilities converging?

- The EU partnership with Africa seeks to help develop the capacity of African governments and institutions to help them ensure Africa's security in the long run. To achieve that goal, the partnership should be based on African ownership, mutual accountability, and tailored approaches/responses to each specific context. Given the nature and size of the challenge, solutions must stem from common strategies and shared responsibilities between Europeans and Africans.
- The EU-AU partnership does not mean that existing bilateral cooperation experiences are outdated: the EU must take advantage of historically rooted relationships. For example, the UK and France are both very active in different parts of Africa working with training teams (namely in Senegal and Kenya). The EU should also bolster its relationship with sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS.



- During the 1990s, EU policies focused almost exclusively on economic and social development. Since then, EU policy has become more complex and comprehensive, meaning that environmental, public health, economic and political aspects of security have gained importance. Also since the 1990s, African leaders launched the African Union (AU) to promote African solutions for African problems.
- European and African participants agreed that states should be the main security providers and that sustainable development depends on security. State-building objectives range from the creation of capabilities to ensure autonomy, sovereignty and territorial integrity, to the development of judiciary and political structures which are indispensable for implementing the rule of law. As a consequence, the EU must mix its different policies to address the root causes of African security and development problems. There is, for example, no point in focusing on conducting free and fair elections if no other measures are taken to tackle other weaknesses (i.e. small arms smuggling and distribution). In that respect, some African delegates pointed out that trade is a major issue (African trade with Europe is not growing, and Africa's share of global is declining, compared to other regions). Indeed, trade is the driving force for economic production, which in turn generates jobs and economic development. In other words, there is a clear connection between development and security.
- While the EU and African governments and institutions share ideas on threats and how to tackle them, this does not mean co-operation is smooth. Both Europeans and Africans have difficulties with budgets, capabilities and/or the political will to intervene. Some important differences should also be taken into account: in contrast to the EU, Africa's peace and security architecture (APSA) is not underpinned by a highly-developed institutional and legal framework. Moreover, ESDP operations are external, while African Union operations deal with Africa's internal security. What's more, the EU can mobilize a broader range of tools and policies to tackle economical, social, security challenges.

2. Session II: Rule of law and political control of the African security sector

- The EU approach to crisis prevention and conflict resolution in Africa has shifted from a focus on the organisation of elections to a more balanced and comprehensive approach, to foster good governance, economic development and the rule of law. Security sector reform is a major step towards promoting the rule of law in Africa.
- In any crisis management operation, security sector reform should be planned for from the beginning. It is an increasingly attractive sector for development donors to work on because they see it as a legitimate territory, but it must also be a locally-led process. Donors should also try to co-ordinate their contributions to ensure aid can be effectively absorbed by the recipient governments.
- In this field there is no "one size fits all" solution. Reform must involve local actors so that the EU and others can hand over security management to efficient local forces. For example, many speakers recognized that Armed Forces are often part of the problem but no lasting solution can be found if they are not party to it.
- To guarantee the rule of law in Africa and avoid duplication, the EU should coordinate its action with aid donors, security reform providers and local actors. And to help ensure the success of the EU operations in Africa, inter-institutional relations between EU/AU bodies



and permanent EU-AU mechanisms for common assessments, benchmarking and lessons learned exercises (perhaps carried out by independent experts) would be useful.

- It is also necessary to assess the impact of globalization, which has transformed Africa into a strategic zone of importance rather than a forgotten continent. Opportunities exist for economic development that did not exist before. This means that Africa does not need to depend on external actors to find solutions in themselves, but it does need partners to help implement those solutions.

3. Session III: EU Africa Cooperation: ownership and responsibility?

- Ownership refers to the capacities of political and social actors in a particular country to set and take responsibility for the security and peace building agenda, and to muster and sustain support for it. In the context of the African Peace Facility (APF), it refers to two dimensions: (I) the ownership of the African Union and other regional and sub-regional groups; (II) the ownership of governments and local political actors.
- A lack of African capabilities was cited as hampering local ownership in Africa. As long as capabilities do not match African requirements, neither Africans nor the EU will be in a position to take advantage of joint co-operation. The EU should be policy and demand-driven rather than mission-driven in Africa when addressing capability shortfalls. The main aim of EU-Africa partnership is to help Africa depend less on outsiders; in that respect the EU's support of the African Stand by Force (ASF) is crucial.
- To enhance transparency and accountability in both EU and African military operations, three things are needed: (I) Strict codes of conduct - concrete EU/AU oversight and sanction mechanisms should be put in place each time military troops are deployed. These should include a zero tolerance policy in terms of outsiders' behaviour on the battlefield and guidelines on respect for local integrity (II) a stringent performance assessment of each programme and operation (III) the accountability of private service providers' contributions should be monitored.
- To enhance African ownership in EU-AU partnership partners should agree and implement three things: (I) concrete day-to-day management principles; (II) Cooperation mechanisms between local and international stakeholders (III) a system to discuss priorities/success criteria and benchmarks – which should be monitored before, during and after any intervention.
- Mutual understanding should be a core aim of the partnership. Some speakers emphasised that it was high time to stop hiding behind the failure of institutions and mechanisms. Joint education and common training programmes would help to develop personal relationships and co-operation. These programmes should be anchored in national and regional training centres under African leadership. Furthermore, in this context it is important to take into account the views and recommendations of civil society groups (such as NGOs).
- Both the EU and African governments and institutions need to develop their mediation capacities to help stop ongoing conflicts and encourage warring parties to reach peace agreements. To help minimize the risk of conflicts in Africa, the EU should also invest more in early warning mechanisms, and in the development of African own capabilities to help prevent the escalation of crises.



Conclusion

- Deeper partnerships between the AU, the UN, sub-regional organisations and the EU are needed to provide a more comprehensive picture of effective co-operation. Simultaneously, along with the AU and African governments, the EU must also take into account the growing influence in Africa of emerging actors on the international scene, namely China and India.
- The Joint EU-Africa strategy and its Action Plan, which will be adopted at the upcoming EU-Africa summit in Lisbon in December, is based on a common and comprehensive approach. In order to increase the credibility of the EU's partnership with Africa, permanent EU-AU mechanisms for common assessments, benchmarking and lessons learned exercises (perhaps carried out by independent experts) should be set up. The EU office to the AU would play a crucial role in developing these forms of co-operation. This would help bridge the gap between an ever-growing strategic convergence of aims and existing operational divergences on the ground.
- EU Member States have an obligation to continue putting Africa on the EU agenda. Effective EU cooperation with Africa requires a common policy – that requires a 'Europeanization' of existing Member States activities in Africa, and the 'Africanisation' of those Member States who are not active in Africa. After the EU-Africa summit it is important that monitoring structures are put in place to ensure future accountability and responsibility in the EU-Africa partnership future actions.
- When assessing European-African co-operation, we should consider three dimensions: I) the help provided to develop Africa has not worked well so far, although the joined-up security/development approach is already an improvement on earlier European approaches; II) "Good Governance" must be linked to "Ownership", learning from the experience of African success stories such as South Africa. III) The EU should make a greater effort to involve both European and African civil society (i.e. parliaments, NGOs) in EU policies from their inception.