



CSO-LA Consultation on the EU Regional Multi-annual Indicative Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (2021-2027)

23 March 2021

On 23 March, the European Commission jointly with the European External Action Service organised a webinar consultation with civil society organisations and local authorities focusing on the future EU regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA MIP 2021-2027).

The event gathered more than 100 participants, representing more than 70 civil society and local authorities global and regional networks, platforms and organisations present in Europe and Africa including members of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD), together with staff from the European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) and the European External Action Service (EEAS)¹.

The meeting followed the PFD virtual discussions on the EU Commission priorities and programming held in 2020, and encouraged further feedback from CSO-LA as country, regional and thematic multi-annual indicative programmes for 2021-2027 are being developed. The meeting provided participants an opportunity to discuss priorities and objectives of the SSA MIP within the context of the evolving partnership between Africa and the European Union. In preparation for the consultation, background documents were made available on [Capacity4Dev](#) in the preceding weeks.

Introduction

Marlene Holzner, Head of Unit, Local Authorities, Civil Society Organisations and Foundations (DG INTPA) greeted organisations from Europe and Africa participating in the event, and encouraged them to contribute to this unique opportunity of exchange with their views and ideas. She highlighted the close cooperation within INTPA, with the EEAS and the collaboration with the PFD in preparing the session, and

the fact that, unlike previous events, the consultation involved a broader range of stakeholders and allowed participants to comment on concrete programming proposals.

Alexander Baum, Senior Adviser for Post-Cotonou, EEAS, began by referring to the new framework for EU external action with the disappearance of the European Development Fund (EDF), and the establishment of a single simplified instrument funded the EU Budget, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe Instrument, to support cooperation and partnerships with all EU partner countries and regions, including Africa. The new instrument is meant to allow for a more flexible and consistent approach to EU external action, in line with EU foreign policy goals and with the aim to promote EU values abroad. Mr Baum explained that the proposal put forward for the consultation meeting was built around the policy priorities outlined in the Council Conclusions of 30 June 2020, “Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa”, and that the EU intends to ensure that policies – including those of its partners – drive the programming and are central to implementation. He also stressed the need for ownership and partnership, and for processes to be driven by the EU’s partners themselves, within Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union (AU) and other fora. On its part, the EU intends to be considered as a whole, with EU Member States fully involved into what the EU is doing on the continent through “Team Europe” initiatives.

Hans-Christian Stausboll, Head of Unit, Regional and Multi-Country Programmes for Africa, DG INTPA framed the SSA MIP programming process within the broader NDICI-Global Europe instrument. He presented the three pillars of the new instrument: (1) geographic (neighbourhood, sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Pacific, Americas and the Caribbean), (2) thematic (human rights and democracy, CSOs, peace, stability and conflict prevention, global challenges), (3) rapid response (crisis response and conflict prevention, resilience and linking humanitarian and development actions, union foreign policy needs and priorities), and its spending targets. Mr Stausboll then introduced the guiding principles of programming: “policy first” and partnerships; geographisation; working through 7-year multiannual

¹ See participants list attached



indicative programmes; priority areas and related sectors; using funds as financial leverage, engagement with and support to civil society; results and experience-based programming;. He further stressed the importance of joint programming and the “Team Europe” approach. Subsidiarity remains a guiding principle of the programming of the EU, with interlinked responses designed to deliver results at continental, multi-country/sub-regional and national levels. Mr Stausboll stressed the fact that it was key for EU priorities to add value rather than substitute priorities at national level. The process will be guided by results and experience, the EU choosing the most appropriate partner for implementation with no pre-defined envelopes for individual organisations. With the aim to align EU funding with the continental and sub-regional policies and strategies of the African Union and Regional Economic Communities, a process of consultations between the EC, the AU and RECs on overall and sub-regional priorities is underway.

Mr Stausboll concluded by underlining the intention to hold regular consultations with CSO and LAs during the multiannual framework 2021-27, helping the EC not only in the programming but also in overseeing implementation.

Q&A – Reactions from the floor pointed at the need to strengthen reference to the SDGs and Agenda 2030, gender equality mainstreaming, food security, human rights, enabling environment and civic space, bridging the digital divide, youth development, and reaching those left behind. One intervention also strongly argued for a more prominent role of African CSO and LAs networks in the regional programming, calling for support to capacity building at local, national, regional and global levels, and to decentralised cooperation as a modality that empowers and builds the capacity of local governments. As part of his reply, Mr Stausboll stressed that SDGs are a point of departure for all EU programming, that at least 85% of NDICI-Global Europe funds will mainstream gender, and at least 5% will go to specific gender actions. Mr Stausboll also reassured participants that youth and education are major concerns for Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen - and clarified that the Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Sub-Saharan region will have links to Northern Africa as needed for the achievement of specific objectives. Further clarification was also given on the

issues of “enabling environment” and “closing space” as priorities to be addressed primarily under the dedicated CSO thematic programme during the period 2021-27.

Participants then joined discussions in breakout rooms, covering each of the five priorities of the regional programming: 1) green transition; 2) digital transformation and economic integration; 3) investment and jobs; 4) peace, governance and human development; 5) migration and mobility.


Report from breakout sessions

Green transition

In her introduction to the debate, **Enrica Pellacani, Team Leader, DG INTPA**, referred to the areas targeted under Green Transition component of the SSA MIP and including agriculture, sustainable agri-food systems and nutrition, energy and climate change, biodiversity, water, (incl., the blue economy, wetlands and oceans).

In reporting to the plenary **Frederic Vallier, Secretary General, Council of European Municipalities and Regions**, highlighted the following messages:

- ✓ Green transition is a major priority for Africa as it is for Europe and the rest of the world; It is important to extend initiatives to the local level, as this is where the biggest impact on environment and climate resilience can be made;
- ✓ Working in partnership with LAs in Africa, for example through the Covenant of Mayors in sub-Saharan and North Africa, has demonstrated the capacity to mobilise local governments on climate change and energy;
- ✓ More emphasis must be put on supporting existing African initiatives, such as the African adaptation initiative and the African Green initiative;
- ✓ The transformative potential of agro-ecology should be recognised, for its impact on production but also on nutrition, environment, culture and human rights (right to food).
- ✓ Protecting land rights, rights of indigenous people, supporting farmers' organisations, family farming as well as women involved in agriculture should remain central in the EU intervention strategy.
- ✓ Water and wetlands management are issues of critical importance for sub-regions such as the Sahel,



as they are the core of the intersection between economy, conflict and migration.

- ✓ In addressing green and climate change priorities, an integrated approach should be pursued which considers the co-benefits on a variety of policy objectives.
- ✓ The importance of building the necessary interlinkages between actions at country and regional level, e.g., in preserving / restoring ecological connectivity, avoiding deforestation, preventing coastal erosion and reducing disaster risk.
- ✓ Among EU-supported initiatives, participants pointed at successful programmes such as the “Switch Africa to Green”, which has involved closely African local authorities in circular economy issues; “NaturAfrica”, that has tackled biodiversity loss by creating a network of protected areas to protect wildlife and offer opportunities in green sectors for local populations; the “Blue Lifeline” initiative, key to protecting wetlands in the Sahel region, the EU-Africa Energy Initiative.
- ✓ In promoting green transition the EU has a significant role to play, and can bring added value to partnership building, by promoting multi-stakeholder alliances, synergies and transparency.

Digitalization and economic integration

Fabio di Stefano, Team Leader, DG INTPA, introduced the debate, underlining the fact that digital transformation comes with great opportunities for growth and development as well as with new challenges and risks. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis in particular, digital technologies and solutions have proven to be indisputable assets for managing the emergency and building social and economic resilience. But COVID 19 has also exacerbated inequalities; digital transformation should therefore ensure to “leave no-one behind”. With regard to regional economic integration, the EU moderator presented the proposed approach by value chain and economic corridors, focusing on trade facilitation, customs administration, trade in services, digital trade and statistics. He indicated the intention to promote, as part of this approach, both “people” and “planet” priorities, including environmental sustainability,


inclusive growth – targeting women and youth, the promotion of public-private dialogue etc.

In reporting on the group discussions, **Tanya Cox, Director of Concord Europe**, referred to the following aspects:

- ✓ The need to mitigate risks related to dependence on digital systems owned or managed by companies and governments and the role CSOs and parliaments as watchdogs and advocates for inclusive legislation.
- ✓ The centrality of good governance and the rule of law in the process of digitalization, and the role that EU must play in ensuring respect of highest standards in what concerns human rights.
- ✓ The importance for EU initiatives to build on and connect African innovation/ideas at different levels;
- ✓ The need to build capacities and skills to facilitate equal access for all, tackle the gender gap - closely linked to women empowerment, as well as the risk of restriction of access to digital technologies in authoritarian regimes.
- ✓ Concern about increasing influence of actors such as international digital platforms that have an influence in countries and cities, and the answer the EU should give to these new challenges.
- ✓ How the EU can contribute to the local economy and encourage a just transition, avoiding the loss of jobs that could come with digital transformation.
- ✓ (on regional economic integration) The importance for African countries to move beyond over reliance on export of raw materials, towards transforming products and creating more added value.
- ✓ The need for greater harmonisation of regional programmes, and the necessity to involve CSOs at regional level, which requires technical skills and capacities.
- ✓ The need to foster continental dynamics by promoting links with North African economies.

Investment and jobs

Lamine Diallo, Cooperation Officer, DG INTPA, introduced the session on investment and jobs recalling that economic opportunities and decent job creation in Africa and the EU could be substantially enhanced through joint action on four priority fronts: (a) boosting trade and sustainable investments in Africa; (b) improving the investment climate and business environment; (c) increasing access to quality education, skills, research, innovation, health and social rights; and



(d) advancing regional and continental economic integration.

In her report to the plenary, Ms **Georgia Papoutsi, Policy Coordinator, International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)**, highlighted, among others, the following aspects:

- ✓ The need to address the current macro-economic context - with a particular focus on the rising sovereign debt - when discussing investment.
- ✓ The importance of social protection standards and “decent jobs” creation, including in the ‘new’ digital and green areas. This requires access to quality education and thinking about how to promote decent work in the informal sector, the “care economy” and agriculture, through sustainable and inclusive business models - where ILO standards on occupational health and safety should apply.
- ✓ The importance of supporting female and young entrepreneurs and ensuring that decent jobs are available to the youth.
- ✓ Social protection being one of the key elements for the formalisation of the informal economy, the creation of a global fund for social protection was suggested - with guarantees to poorest countries -, as well as EU support to social dialogue and collective bargaining at national and regional levels , including in the hardest contexts;
- ✓ CSOs (including SME association, organisations of smallholders, cooperatives) play a major role in the transition from an informal to a formal economy; SMEs, farmers and cooperatives need to be supported through investments, adequate policies and regulatory frameworks.
- ✓ Role of both the private and public sector to achieve long-lasting impact in terms of job creation; the public sector being especially important for creating decent jobs in the health and care economy, securing against informality and addressing gender inequality.
- ✓ The role of local authorities as strategic investors within local economies, as well as the need for regional exchanges and information sharing to enable a people-focused business environment;
- ✓ Centrality of cross cutting issues such as gender equality, youth empowerment and inclusivity to ensure that benefits can reach the underserved segments of society.

Peace, Governance and Human Development

Jorge Pereiro Pinon, Team Leader, DG INTPA, described the main areas to be covered under this priority: (1) peace and security (support to African initiatives to prevent and manage conflict including implementation by CSOs, fight against transnational crimes and integrated support for resilience in borderlands); (2) governance (support to continental legal frameworks, support to electoral cycles, gender equality, youth inclusion and enhancing citizenship participation, support to freedom of expression, access to media); (3) culture (promoting Africa-Europe and intra-African cultural exchanges and cooperation, protecting African cultural heritage). In addition, Human Development will cover priorities in the fields of Health and Education, from better pandemic preparedness to developing platforms for education and skill development.

Ruth-Marie Henckes, Advocacy and Communications Coordinator at European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), rapporteur of the group, presented its conclusions, referring to:

- ✓ The need to address social protection policies, health governance, ensuring the implementation of the Maputo protocol and support to organisations dealing with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and women’s rights.
- ✓ With regard to education, the need to consider a needs-based rather than merit-based approach given the unequal opportunities of children in different situations;
- ✓ Tackling corruption through mainstreaming across all priority areas;
- ✓ Involvement of local and regional governments to achieve regional priorities, which requires capacity building and the promotion of decentralised cooperation.
- ✓ Mainstreaming of enabling environment and civil society space in all partnerships.
- ✓ The regional level as particularly well suited for work on the triple nexus, combining national with cross-border action and a focus on peacebuilding. Issues that may be politically sensitive at national level (freedom of the media, CSO support including LGBTQ+, political parties) can be addressed at regional level.
- ✓ Implementation of Agenda 2030, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights



(ICCPR) remain key and require more participation from women, youth and people living with disabilities.

- ✓ Multiple initiatives that the EU can use to promote good governance and adherence to sub-regional protocols on elections and democracy, such as support to local level structures, cross-border education, the African governance architecture, the strengthening the African Peer Review Mechanism and Regional Economic Communities, etc.

Migration and mobility

Victoria Garcia Guillén, Cooperation Officer, DG INTPA, presented the 3 specific objectives under this Sub-Saharan Regional programming priority area : (1) Contribute to strengthening migration policy, governance, and management in Sub-Saharan Africa; (2) Addressing protection and long-term needs and supporting durable solutions for displaced populations and host communities including education, health and livelihoods; (3) Establishing a flexible financing mechanism to encourage relevant origin, transit, destination and/or host countries of the region to better address their migration and/or forced displacement challenges. She stressed the fact that regional programming was still an ongoing process, and that "border management" was not a priority area for the EU anymore.

The main conclusions and recommendations from the discussion group were presented by **Salim Kormaz, General Coordinator of UCGT MENA**, who referred to aspects such as:

- ✓ The importance of a human-right based approach to migration, placing people at the centre.
- ✓ The need to focus on the legal bases of migration and framing migration as a force for development. This includes intraregional mobility, strengthening the protection of children on the move, resource mobilisation for non-EU partners, and improving the employment opportunities for migrant youth in particular. Attention should also be directed to non-European migration routes;
- ✓ Added value of EU action at regional level in improving the legal pathways, enhancing the coherence of multicounty programmes, the effectiveness of single country programmes;

- ✓ Need for more activities focussed on youth employability and entrepreneurship, and including adequate policies to empower the youth;
- ✓ Role of CSOs and LAs within the framework of migration management based on subsidiarity and decentralised cooperation;
- ✓ Importance of the Framework Partnership Agreements with CSOs networks in the continent;
- ✓ Role of the EU in encouraging different stakeholders, including diaspora organisations, refugees-led organisations to learn from each other;
- ✓ Need for strengthened references to the UN Global compact on migration, managing migration based on the subsidiarity principle, and paying more attention to local governments, which play an important role in tackling root causes of migration;
- ✓ Concern about Africa being split in two regions (sub-Saharan and Northern), especially with regard to migration which is a continental issue; programmes having a continental scope should be developed;
- ✓ EU migration initiatives should better address issues of inequality and development of local communities; this should be done by recognising the differentiated impacts on development at different parts of the migration route.
- ✓ The importance of avoiding short-sighted initiatives; the need for initiatives targeting those who are too poor to migrate, and the inclusion of a gender perspective, as women have been more affected by COVID-19;

Wrap up and conclusions

The discussion closed with short concluding remarks from representatives of CSOs, LAs and EU officials.

Tanya Cox, Civil Society Co-chair of the PFD, urged the EU to think differently and, rather than working on integrating the suggestions and recommendations received into an already existing framework, take a step back to reflect on whether the framework itself is adequate or not. Ms Cox called on the EU to implement the lessons learned from the multiple crises, which are currently unfolding: rising inequalities, the global pandemic and the environmental crisis. She stressed that the EU must recognise the necessary links between the social, economic, governance and environmental aspects of its policies, and the challenges it faces - policy coherence being crucial in this context. Ms Cox concluded that there is a need for the EU to reflect on how to support African initiatives.



Frédéric Vallier, Local Authorities Co-chair of the PFD, stated that the added value of a regional programme should be to allow diverse partners working together to design policies that will enable transnational and multi-stakeholder partnerships, as well as provide capacity building to and empowering African initiatives. He stressed that linking CSOs and local and regional governance is essential in all policy areas: climate change, health, education, public services, and that encouraging the participation of academia, CSOs, business, city-to-city and region-to-region cooperation is a tool for capacity building and cooperation. Mr Vallier stated that while the thematic budget line for LAs no longer exists, other ways of funding decentralised cooperation should be explored, as there is a need to have its importance recognised and supported. The EU is crucial in this context as national political contexts can be sensitive. He observed that, in the new regulation on NDICI - Global Europe, regional and local governments were recognised as key to tackling inequalities. Mr Vallier closed his intervention by stating that LAs want to partner with the EU and CSOs to support African initiatives and to invent a new development model for Africa – for Africans and with Africans.

After thanking participants for their contributions, **Hans-Christian Stausboll** encouraged CSO-LA to take part in the online written consultation open until 30th March. He agreed that there is a need for the EU to consider innovative approaches, for example on engaging with the youth to understand their aspirations and ambitions. At the same time he referred to effective implementation as the main challenge ahead, tapping into the close interlinkages existing among priority areas. To this end the EU will need the support of stakeholders and will endeavour to hold similar consultations with CSO and LAs on a regular basis.