

Summary report
CSO Information Meeting in the context of the
European Union-African Union Commission-to-Commission meeting and
in view of designing a more permanent CSO engagement mechanism
7 November 2022

I. Introduction and methodology

INTPA, in coordination with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and in the framework of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD), hosted an online information session with civil society organisations (CSOs). The first part of the meeting aimed to provide further information on the Africa-EU Partnership and CSO engagement in the AU-EU Commission to Commission (C2C) meeting. In the second part of the meeting, CSOs presented progress on a civil society (CS) dialogue mechanism. There were opportunities for questions and contributions during the session.

II. Opening remarks

Chiara Adamo, DG INTPA Acting Director for Human Development, Migration, Governance, and Peace, opened the session, recalling that CSOs and youth representatives called for a more permanent stakeholder dialogue mechanism during the Africa-Europe Week in the run-up to the EU-AU Summit in February 2022.¹ An exchange with Commissioner Urpilainen on main views and possible ways forward was then held in July, at which CSOs and youth were invited to self-organise volunteers to develop ideas for this future mechanism. The timely involvement of EU and AU representatives is important to the development of the mechanism.

III. Presentation of the EU-AU Joint Vision for a renewed Partnership (refer to PPT slides)

Asad Beg, EEAS Senior Expert and team leader for EU-AU affairs in the Pan-African Division, outlined the four pillars of the EU-AU Joint Vision: Prosperity and sustainability (including the Global Gateway (GG) € 150 billion announced for joint investment); Peace and Security; Migration and Mobility; and Multilateralism. CS input across all pillars is important to shape the agenda and keep all parties informed of realities on the ground.

IV. Presentation of the 11th AU-EU C2C and side event with CSO/Youth on 28 November

Domenico Rosa, DG INTPA Head of Strategic Partnerships, recalled that the C2C was established with the launch of the AU-EU Partnership in 2007. The aim of the C2C is annual dialogue around the main Partnership priorities, policies and investments; and to monitor progress and follow-up of the Heads of State Summit of February 2022. While there are differences between the AU Commission, which is an interinstitutional/intergovernmental secretariat, and the EU Commission, which has more autonomy, the purpose of the C2C is to establish a balanced partnership between both AU and EU Commissioners, including agreeing on concrete actions from both sides, to maximise results.

The Africa-Europe Week was an important and innovative step forward in terms of CS involvement. In this context, the European Commission proposes a side event in the morning of the C2C on 28 November, in the style of “Meet

¹ All information from the AU-EU Summit can be found here, including the Conclusions and Joint Declaration: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2022/02/17-18/>
The press release can be found here: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/02/18/sixth-european-union-african-union-summit-a-joint-vision-for-2030/>.

the Leaders”, to facilitate direct interaction between CS representatives and some EU and AU Commissioners who will be attending the C2C. Discussions would centre on progress made since the Summit on each of the C2C working group topics², to provide input into the C2C debate from the CS perspectives. Additionally, this side event to the C2C is part of a process to develop more permanent stakeholder engagement in the EU-Africa Partnership, as was also encouraged in the Summit Declaration.

V. Presentation of the CSO-led process to define suggestions for a CSO dialogue mechanism

Adam Alqali, African Newspaper and **Riccardo Roba**, CONCORD Europe explained that this democratic exercise requires time but is proving fruitful. The process began with gathering input from other partnership mechanisms for engaging with civil society, with valuable inputs from the INTPA-OECD joint team, but also other experiences, such as the civil society and indigenous people’s mechanism for the UN Committee on World Food Security.

The draft concept note for the mechanism is progressing well but has not yet been finalised. It is organised in four sections: i) “Why” vision that the voices of the people most affected by decisions must be at the core of an effective and meaningful Africa-EU partnership; ii) “What” objective of facilitating CS participation in co-creating the Partnership agenda and monitoring implementation of decisions and initiatives; iii) “How” functions and activities to be undertaken in order to promote a structured dialogue; and iv) “Who” rights-based governance of the mechanism, and principles of inclusiveness; priority voice given to the most affected sectors of the population; balance between regions; and gender.

The mechanism proposed will be rooted in autonomous and voluntary CS commitments. Effective engagement will require a political commitment by the AU and EU recognising CS as a fully-fledged partner, and allocation of necessary administrative and financial resources. It will use hybrid platforms (online and in-person), and facilitate the participation of a diverse and balanced group of CSOs from Africa, Europe and the diaspora, allowing them to discuss common issues and priorities, share knowledge and resources, and build capacity. It should also ensure that African and EU institutions proactively share information in different languages, including feedback on how CSO consultations are used by leaders.

In conclusion, Alqali and Robba expressed the need for active dialogue with the AU to develop the mechanism, with a number of upcoming opportunities including the November C2C in Brussels, and called on the European Commission to initiate this. They also asked for the support of the European Commission to hold a public consultation to incorporate views from a wider group of African and European CSOs that could not be part of the process of drafting the framework. This consultation forms part of the CS action plan with targeted activities to finalise their suggestions for the engagement mechanism.

VI. Concluding remarks

Patrick Rabe, INTPA Team Leader for CSOs, summed up discussions and next steps. The importance of the PFD as a forum for dialogue and openness to organising further information sessions was emphasised.

As next steps, the report and PPT presentation from this meeting will be shared so that CS can disseminate them among networks. The Commission will be in touch with further details about the C2C meeting on 28 November. On the consultation mechanism, the work of the CS voluntary group will continue, and the Commission will step

² The four working groups will be on: 1) How to achieve GG connectivity through economic integration, digital, energy, transport, value chain; 2) How to boost economic and social development: health, education and student and teacher mobility, science, technology and innovation; 3) How to build resilience to current shocks such as energy prices and food insecurity (including development of agrifood systems; climate measures; humanitarian assistance and disaster risk reduction); and 4) Peace, security and governance, where there is longstanding cooperation with the AU.

up work to contribute to this in addition to meetings already foreseen. The point about involving the AU and its member states was noted.

Annex: Proposals and clarifications from the discussion

1. AU-EU Partnership and C2C meeting

Commission clarifications:

CS involvement: While negotiations are between the AU and EU, it is important to develop the proposed more permanent CSO engagement mechanism as a means for CS to articulate positions and provide input upstream, rather than simply in response to meetings. There will also be better sight of the planning process for meetings now, post-pandemic.

Migration and mobility; terrorism and the rule of law: There will be an EU-AU human rights dialogue on 5 December, with a preparatory information session with CS on 17 November and then a CSO seminar on 1-2 December. The Global Gateway (GG) includes 2 Team Europe Initiatives: on the Atlantic/western Mediterranean migration route and on the central Mediterranean migration route. It also includes strengthening the regional response on counterterrorism working with the *Académie internationale de lutte contre le terrorisme*, and a transitional justice initiative.

Monitoring implementation

The Commission is updating factsheets, including on the GG, and preparing actions and information on peace, security and governance; on migration and mobility; and multilateralism. The Commission is also working at several levels (government to government; CS to CS, including thinktanks; and with the private sector) to look at how to mainstream issues like corporate social responsibility (CSR) and investment in people.

A follow-up committee with foreign ministers from both sides will look at what has been achieved since the Summit. This will meet back-to-back with the ministerial meeting tentatively planned in Brussels in the first semester of 2023. A joint AU-EU press statement will be negotiated and agreed. The Commission is working with the AU on two deliverables to be endorsed at the meeting: 1) a proposal for the ministerial monitoring committee; and 2) a monitoring table that establishes milestones and reports on how commitments are being implemented. From the EU point of view there is no reason why it could not be made public once its structure and content are endorsed.

CS should certainly have a permanent and structured role in monitoring how the Partnership is implemented. The question is how best to achieve this. The OECD open government division have carried out extensive academic and practical work on this and are helping the EU and OACPS in shaping a mechanism for CS information, consultation and engagement that respects the roles and functions of different partners.

CS proposals:

- CS participants expressed interest in the side-event proposal to discuss progress made since the Summit in the same four thematic clusters as the official working groups. They will discuss further among CSOs and come back to the Commission with a view.
- In terms of the C2C discussion on the structured mechanism for CS engagement, will this be mainstreamed in all clusters, or will there be a separate working group, or discussion in plenary? Participants emphasised the importance of member states being on board in addition to a joint approach at the end of the C2C.

- A progress report of the first 8 months since the summit; setting out plans for the coming years and how the GG, TEIs, regional programming for SSA all come together could be a useful way of providing information to CSOs in advance so they can have useful input.
- CS underlined that the monitoring mechanism is at the heart of significant engagement with CS and ensuring accountability and legitimacy. Another point of C2C discussion might be how to ensure CS is a part of the monitoring mechanism so that the proposal emerging from the C2C makes the CS position official.
- There was also a suggestion for joint monitoring: tripartite CSO – Government (AU-EU) – private sector, even if it is with a smaller team.

2. CSO engagement mechanism

Clarifications:

- Efforts have been made to bring in as many **youth** and **trade union** representatives as possible.

Proposals:

- CS will share an updated draft of the mechanism to this PFD group when further agreement has been reached on more of the operational parts.
- Information sessions such as this one are useful. CS propose another possible information session to discuss the draft concept note in greater depth, followed by a more formal public consultation to ensure more CS and youth organisations can input and agree to the proposed CSO engagement mechanism.
- Once CS agree on a final draft concept note, and approach the EU and AU to negotiate terms of engagement, it could be useful to hold a strategic discussion about the dissemination plan and how to ensure buy-in to make the mechanism successful.