



**Policy
Forum on
Development**

**Online meeting with Commissioner Urpilainen on Africa-Europe Week follow-up
5 July 2022
11.30 – 13.30 CET**

“Commissioner Urpilainen launches dynamics towards a more structured and permanent dialogue mechanism with civil society and youth organisations in the Africa-Europe Partnership.”

Building on the dynamics of the Africa-Europe Week, on 5 July 2022, Commissioner Urpilainen invited civil society and youth organisations to a dedicated meeting to begin the joint creation of a new permanent dialogue mechanism in the Africa-Europe Partnership.

Working together with civil society organisations is an essential building block of democracy, development and cohesion. The European Commission is therefore aiming at providing civil society organisations with an even greater role in the decision-making process, and seeking to further empower citizen engagement by moving away from traditional approaches and working in true a spirit of co-creation.

As an introduction, Commissioner Urpilainen shared with participants some of the progress made in response to the policy recommendations from civil society in the Africa-Europe week, notably the decision to set human development at the heart of the partnership. The meeting was an occasion to share visions for this new mechanism and discuss the multiple roles that civil society could play, notably in terms of expertise, implementation and monitoring. The mechanism will be as inclusive as possible, and encourage participation from a wide diversity of civil society organisations; youth organisations are already playing an active role around the table. The mechanism itself will be a self-standing structure within the Policy Forum for Development framework.

The meeting was additionally an occasion to receive further feedback from civil society organisations following the input received in the framework of the Africa-Europe Week and OECD survey. Participants were invited to share their ideas on how civil society could play a more strategic role in the partnership, the foundations of a meaningful partnership, and the main obstacles for full engagement. Key points of feedback included the necessity of timeliness in communications and planning of the co-creation process, the willingness of civil society to be streamlined in political processes to provide and receive feedback from institutions, the need for a strong commitment from African and European institutions, the importance of reaching out and engaging with local levels to have an impact on them, the usefulness of digital tools and an online platform for collaboration, and the need to consider the difficulties of international mobility and unequal access to VISA.

The first steps towards a more structured and permanent dialogue mechanism with civil society have been launched. Agreed next steps include the co-creation of terms of reference, the self-selection of a smaller group of civil society organisations to coordinate activities and a roadmap including key milestones. An online platform will be created in the coming months to foster further collaboration with and amongst civil society organisations.