



**Consultations of CSOs/ALAs on the  
EU Regional Programming for Sub-Saharan Africa  
Wednesday 26 November 2025  
Online Meeting**

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## Executive Summary

DG INTPA, in the framework of the Policy Forum on Development, hosted an eighth consultative discussion with civil society organisations (CSOs) and associations of local authorities (ALAs) on 26 November 2025 to continue the dialogue and update partners on programming implementation of the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) regional programming exercise. The discussion aimed to provide an update on the implementation of the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for SSA and share feedback on the contributions received from the previous meetings, and hear the views of CSOs and ALAs on the Annual Action Plan (AAP) 2026 and priorities for 2027. The online session was attended by representatives of CSOs and ALAs from the regional networks and platforms present in the European Union (EU) and Africa.

The meeting opened with a welcome note by **Laurent Sillano, Head of Unit of Regional and Multi-Country Programs for Africa, INTPA A2**, and **Marlene Holzner, Head of Unit of Local Authorities, Civil Society Organisations and Foundation, INPTA G2**. Both underlined the importance of consultations with CSOs in the framework of the EU-SSA cooperation, and emphasised the high value placed on the feedback and recommendations received. The participants were encouraged to engage with EU delegations in their respective countries, especially with regard to the Global Gateway projects and the local and regional priority value chains

Subsequently, **Laurent Sillano** briefed the floor on the state of play of the SSA MIP, and the mid-term year review (MTR) of the programme, as well as the adjustments that resulted from that review. The presentation was followed by specific presentations regarding the actions planned in AAP 2026 under the areas of priority, whereby **Deirdre Lennan, team leader for human development, INTPA A2**, gave an overview of the work planned under “Human Development”, which will focus on pharma health products and technologies, and value chains; **Thomas Kirchner, team leader for governance, INTPA A2**, briefed the floor on the work planned under “Democratic Governance”, with a new Partnership for Accountability, Civic Engagement, and Democratic Governance initiative; **Nadia Cannata, team leader for Green Transition, INTPA A2**, presented the four actions that are planned under the “Green Transition” priority area, which address climate mobility, agriculture-foodsystems, biodiversity/environment, and transboundary water; and **Karina Dzialowska, team leader for sustainable growth, INTPA A2**, provided an overview of the planned actions relating to the “Sustainable Growth and Decent Jobs” area, focused on the critical raw materials (CRM) sector, which will address building responsible CRM-related value chains connecting Africa and Europe.

**Briac Deffobis, deputy head of unit, A2, INTPA**, provided an overview of the Global Gateway developments, He highlighted that the initiative aims to foster resilient and sustainable partnerships, grounded in cooperation, shared ownership and mutual trust. This was followed by a presentation from **Theo Kaspers, INTPA A2**, who provided an overview of the cross-cutting recommendations that resulted from last year's consultation session, including the importance of consulting with CSOs in dialogue, policy, advocacy, and implementation; addressing cross-cutting and transboundary issues; ensuring a bottom-up approach; reinforcing the link between climate change, forced displacement, and migration; and supporting the nexus approach that links peace, climate, and migration issues.

The floor then engaged in a question-and-answer session, noting that sector-specific questions were addressed in the corresponding sub group discussions. Participants were invited to send their questions in writing if they wished to. Following the presentations, the participants were divided into five sub-groups to discuss the initiatives that are being presented in the AAP 2026 and the implementation of regional Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) in relation to the topics of the group. The discussion and recommendations were then shared with the plenary.

The main recommendations and conclusions of each group were:

### **1. Human development sub-group**

- Emphasis that the EU is working very closely with regional economic communities and supporting both national and regional efforts on the Pharma Action, which will be demand-driven and open to countries that have this as a priority action in their MIPs.
- Support to the Team Europe on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) was encouraged, commending programmes being launched that are funded by both INTPA and MS jointly, and expressed hope for more funding for SRHR in the coming years, especially in light of the Geneva Consensus Declaration and the Protego programme.
- The importance of Afrika-Europe partnerships in culture was emphasised, with reference to ongoing and planned investments under the current MIP SSA (EUR 70 million in total) implemented notably through continental partnerships.
- Expressed need for sustained and continuous local government engagement.
- Communication must be enhanced, including at the EU delegation level, as well as at the country level with relevant actors, including local governments.
- Synergies were encouraged between initiatives that are being implemented and those planned to ensure continuation and building on best practices.

### **2. Democracy, governance, and peace**

- Expressed support to the consideration of women and youth in political parties as an aspect of support, as well as from the humanitarian perspective.
- Recommendation for more support towards the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- Address the many resolutions reached within the continent, most of which remain weak and not implemented.
- Strengthening human rights beyond the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, such as by considering the African Court, and supporting the African Union in their work on transitional justice mechanisms.
- Perceived disconnect between the delegations at the regional and country levels, with calls for better communication.
- Need for clearer timelines on projects and project cycle management, and clarity on how the funding is going to be channelled and the contractual frameworks in place.
- Nexus projects should be extended to five years and beyond.
- Discussions revolving around the shrinking space for CSOs, especially how the EU would be supporting CSOs working in some of the dangerous spaces.

### **3. Migration and forced displacement**

- Coordination between INTPA and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) in the context of the implementation of the nexus projects was encouraged.
- Discussions over the certification and recognition of skills, especially as each MS has a different scheme to recognise skills and certifications.
- A general perception that the EU has been focusing more on border management and securing EU borders.
- Questions raised regarding whether Global Gateway will deprioritise migration and forced displacement.
- Encouraged attention placed on the issue of missing migrants, and policy dialogue through the Rabat process with the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- Discussions over the Sahel strategy in the context of the roundtable dialogue, which will provide additional political guidelines for the use of the money that has been allocated to the complex setting envelope.

- Overview of the response to the Sudan crisis, and also using the IGAD as a platform to address some of the pressing issues.

#### **4. Green Transition**

- On conservation and environment:
- Concerns were shared about the risks that conservation interventions and promotion of carbon markets could potentially have on the rights of local communities and indigenous people, . The need to promote a conflict sensitive approach and stronger human rights angle in conservation was discussed.
- The need to promote economic development while supporting conservation actions was discussed together with the issue of some landscape and protected areas being located in remote areas, which poses a challenge with respect to economic activities developed at scale.
- Questions were raised about the alignment of NaturAfrica and the Global Gateway Strategy
- On agri-food systems:
- Questions on the definition of food security were raised
- Encouragement to strengthen the efforts of the EU regarding banning the use of harmful pesticides and promoting monitoring frameworks in Africa.
- Promote high standards in agriculture: address safe grounds for crops and agricultural products to ensure they respect the relevant standards with regard to exports from Africa to Europe but also local consumption.
- On climate mobility:
- under a new programme for the Horn of Africa, questions were raised around the adaptation plans, how they are developed and integrated at the local level, and the major gap in anticipatory actions. Questions were also raised on the importance to promote early warning systems
- Encouraged the integration of wetlands in the different programmes.

#### **5. Sustainable growth and decent jobs**

- The issue of cooperation, mostly when it comes to CRM, was highlighted and acknowledged as a relevant area under the Global Gateway. However, there are challenges related to unsustainable practices related to human rights violations, gender inequality, child labour, and negative environmental practices.
- Underlined the importance of transparency in contracts assigned, and adhering to ESG standards.
- Encouraged further work with beneficiary governments and investment banks to ensure transparency and that the procedures applied are responding to what the CSOs fight for.
- Ensure that when contracts and programmes are designed, CSOs' views are taken into account at the right moment in time to guarantee an impact of their voice.
- Provide an enabling environment for the private sector around the CRM investment and encourage the replication of successful examples.
- Address risky jobs for certain segments, for instance pregnant women and children working in the uranium sector and ensure that these are considered in CRM actions.
- Enhance coordination between the continental level, the regional level, and the local level to ensure the sustainability of what is being done.

**Laurent Sillano** thanked everyone for their participation in the discussion, noting that the contributions will be collated in order to consider them and incorporate them in the relevant areas. Another consultation session is planned in 2026. The meeting was closed.



## Welcome remarks

**Laurent Sillano, Head of Unit of Regional and Multi-Country Programs for Africa, INTPA A2** and **Marlene Holzner, Head of Unit of Local Authorities, Civil Society Organisations and Foundation, INTPA G2** welcomed everyone to the meeting, and underlined the importance of consultations with CSOs in the framework of the EU-SSA cooperation, and the great value of the feedback and recommendations received. The participants were encouraged to engage with EU delegations in their respective countries, especially with regard to the Global Gateway projects. Furthermore, structural dialogue between the EU and the African Union was underlined as a very important dimension of such cooperation.

## Presentations

### State of play of regional Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa

**Laurent Sillano** briefed the floor on the state of play of regional Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA MIP), reminding the floor that the cooperation instrument used is Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation (NDICI), with a budget of €29 billion, with the regional envelope having a budget of €12 billion. The EU carried out a mid-term year review (MTR) of the programme, and addressed the relevance of the priority sectors, recommending a stronger alignment of the Global Gateway strategy and emphasis on investments. One adjustment was the integration of social protection, regional value chains and CRM, as well as stronger response on migration management and specific funding for countries in complex settings. The SSA MIP is divided in six priority areas and three cross cutting envelopes, focused on support of investment, actions in countries in complex settings, and support measures. In total, €8.6 billion have been committed, which is 72% of the MIP, with 147 actions. There are €2.4 billion remaining to be employed, and all areas of work are on track. Regarding AAP 2026, there are 11 new actions planned, whose budget is €534 million, covering all 6 areas. The adoption is planned for the first quarter of 2026.

### AAP 2026

**Deirdre Lennan, team leader for human development, DG INTPA A2**, gave an overview of the work planned under the area of Human Development in the AAP 2026, which will focus on pharma health products and technologies, and value chains, whose budget is €55 million. The action will reinforce health sector resilience and African strategic autonomy by focusing on underserved segments of the pharmaceutical value chain. Work will connect local markets to the regional supply chains and strengthen local production and supply. There is also work in regulatory functions and in the area of attracting investment in the health sector. The action is going to have two different approaches: one is a country approach, focused on building stronger public and private ecosystems, and the second is a regional, multi-country level, focused on regulatory aspects, pooled procurement mechanisms, R&D, and support structures.

**Thomas Kirchner, team leader for governance, peace & security, and migration, DG INTPA A2**, briefed the floor on the work planned in the areas of Democratic Governance and Peace and Security,, with a new €45 million initiative called Partnership for Accountability, Civic Engagement, and Democratic Governance (PACED). This programme will focus on: 1. provide support to the African Union Transitional Justice Policy, and sustain implementation of that policy at the national and regional level; 2. support to the transparency, credibility, and inclusivity of **electoral** processes at national, regional, and continental levels, as well as support to regional CSO networks to foster the engagement in electoral processes; 3. promote open governance reforms and empower independent media; and 4. fight tax evasion and tax fraud, tackle illicit financial flows, and improve transparency and integrity in fiscal operations. In the area of peace and security, the three new initiatives in the pipeline are: a follow-up programme to enhance maritime security in the Southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden region; a borderlands programme focused on four geographic clusters (Western Africa, Horn of Africa, Great Lakes, Southern Africa), whose aim is to support peace and resilience building, promote better natural resource

management, improve socioeconomic conditions, and strengthen local resilience to conflicts; and TraCES, a new programme tackling trafficking and crime along the corridors in Eastern and Southern Africa, which will be done by promoting increased information exchange between authorities, and strengthening operational capacities.

**Nadia Cannata, leader for Green Transition, DG INTPA A2**, briefed the floor on the four actions that are planned under the Green Transition priority area, which address climate, agriculture systems, biodiversity, environment, and water and oceans, and contribute to continental initiatives or flagships. In terms of climate mitigation and resilience, the focus will be on climate mobility in the Horn of Africa, bringing together migration and climate. In terms of sustainable agri-food systems, the focus will be on continuing the support to the eradication of PPR (*Peste des petits ruminants*) in SSA, and focus will be placed on control and eradication, and strengthening capacities of veterinarian services. On biodiversity and environment, Nature Africa Regional Phase II will work on key biodiversity and development landscapes, with a stronger focus on issues related to livelihood, economic development, and investments. Water and oceans will also be addressed through several initiatives to work on transboundary water management, with focus on the Mono Basin

**Karina Dzialowska, team leader for sustainable growth, INTPA A2**, provided an overview of the planned actions in AAP 2026 relating to the Sustainable Growth and Decent Jobs area, focused on the critical raw materials (CRM) sector. The project, ESG for Minerals, will focus on building responsible CRM-related value chains connecting Africa and Europe. The first objective will focus on governance, transparency, and traceability around the CRM-value chains, with focus on due diligence requirements for the mining sector and support for CSOs in the Great Lakes region. The second objective is supporting environmental and social standards, ensuring adherence to the best environmental social standards from the private sector operators, and supporting the private sector operators. The third objective will focus on building skills and on technology transfer to add value into the value chains and strengthen the economic impact of new investments in the emerging CRM-related sector.

**Laurent Sillano** concluded that DG INTPA is formulating the aforementioned actions, noting that the decision to adopt them is expected in March 2026. Work with TEIs will continue meanwhile, noting that these initiatives are gathering EU MS around common policy objectives, whereby the different AAPs are building blocs for the TEIs. The next CSO consultation on the AAP 2027 will take place during the second half of 2026.

### **Global Gateway**

**Briac Defobis** gave an overview of the Global Gateway updates, whose aim is sustainable partnership and resilience through a collaborative approach based on sustainability and trust. Global Gateway is relying on EU interests and values, as well as the interest of partners in 5 dimensions, including the digital area, climate and energy, transport, education and research, and health. The Global Gateway strategy is implemented as much as possible through TEIs, noting that it is unique in the sense that it develops a holistic approach of investments, capacity building, governance, and social inclusion in a 360 approach. There is a combination of Global Gateway and several instruments, such as grants, blending, attracting investments, loans, and technical assistance. It combines technical assistance to prepare partners and strengthen institutional capacities; it also includes guarantees, which allows for risk mitigation, investment, and the mobilisation of capital.

### **Feedback and recommendations received**

**Theo Kaspers** provided an overview of the cross-cutting recommendations that resulted from last year's session. The first was the importance of consulting with CSOs in dialogue, policy, advocacy, and implementation. The second recommendation dealt with the cross-coding and transboundary issues, and how they are being addressed. The third generic recommendation was to ensure a bottom-up approach, whereby strategies for countries are no longer written by the EU side alone, but are based on national, regional, and continental strategies. That means that regional programmes are embedded in national strategies and are designed in close

consultations with delegations on the ground, as well as with thematic and dual units. Another recommendation was to reinforce the link between climate change, forced displacement, and migration, and the nexus approach that links peace, climate, and migration issues. In a previous AAP, one action was regarding the protection, assistance, and solutions for forcibly displaced populations in SSA, which explicitly mentioned the humanitarian development peace nexus together with climate change. As such, climate change is embedded in the overall logic of these types of programmes. The last recommendation was to support national schemes in parallel with regional schemes. This has been achieved, as strategies are embedded already in national, regional, or continental policies and strategies, and regional programmes are working in complementarity with national interventions in the core, strategic priorities in the countries in question.

### Questions and Answers Session

Following the presentations, the floor engaged in an open discussion.

**NRC** raised two questions. One was regarding the fact that Central Sahel countries are almost not included, except for the Mali–Côte d’Ivoire border intervention. They asked whether this was due to delays in implementing the plans for interventions in complex settings. They also noted that cross-border movements are increasing in this region and asked whether there was an ongoing dialogue to enable the EU to resume or continue its engagement in this region, particularly through regional actions. **Laurent Sillano** explained that with regard to the Central Sahel issue, this is a new envelope created after the MTR, and is in the start up phase of the envelope, which is why no commitments have been allocated, noting that all funds will be committed at the end of 2027.

**WECF** asked about the format of the Global Gateway contributions, in terms of whether they are subsidies, blending, or guarantees. **Larisa Paula Taylor, DG INTPA**, clarified that Global Gateway covers multiple financial instruments, such as blending and guarantees. With regard to blending, for the regional projects, there is an envelope of €6 billion, half of which have been employed in 50 regional projects. Meanwhile, the Gateway Open Architecture Guarantee is a pool of €4 billion with 33 investment projects. There is also the TEI with 13 European and also non-European financial institutions.

**The Danish Red Cross** requested further elaboration on how CSOs can secure better access to TEIs, and what practical steps or entry points are recommended. **Laurent Sillano** recommended that CSOs reach out to Delegations on the ground, as delegations are carrying out consultation with CSOs every year. Contributions and questions will be channelled to the appropriate frameworks.

**CIDH Africa** asked if the evaluation of the Global Gateway was done, as there are difficulties to see impact on the African citizen on the ground. They added that peace and security for instance are still alarming, and asked about the evaluation that was done regarding the programme. **Laurent Sillano** explained that there has been no evaluation yet, and it is still under implementation. However, in 2026, an evaluation of Global Gateway will take place. On peace and security, Global Gateway is only part of the work done, noting that there is work done in other frameworks on fragility and complex settings, of which peace and security is part.

**DSW** enquired about the number of funding and actions planned in the area of human development, whereby there is only one in the area of health and funding of €55 million, whilst the chart showed a figure of €150 million. They noted that there are no actions planned for human development in 2027, which is worrying. **Laurent Sillano** underlined that there were a lot of funds allotted for human development in 2025 and the bulk of the programming has already been done before the end of the programme. Furthermore, programmes that will be

committed in 2026 will be implemented in 2027, 2028, and 2029. There are also unprogrammable funds, which can address such priorities.<sup>1</sup>

**Global Network of CSOs for Disaster Reduction** asked about the basis that projects and countries are selected are. They also noted that loans can be very complex and heavy for CSOs, and therefore enquired what is planned to collaborate with CSOs in the area of loans. **Laurent Sillano** clarified that this is a regional programme, and that on top of the regional programme, there are programmes for each country in Africa. Therefore, in the regional programme, countries are not selected, but rather the best projects are. Regarding loans, there are no new instruments within the Global Gateway for loans. Instead, what is being done is combining instruments from development finance institutions for more impact. The loans are either sovereign to the states, or sub-sovereign to local authorities, or to the private sector, as well as intermediated loans through commercial banks that CSO may benefit from.

**Community Humanitarian Emergency Board** noted that COSs at the local level face difficulties to access funding owing to the complicated situation on the ground and asked how to be included in the strategies. **Laurent Sillano** suggested that CSOs get in touch with Delegations to get first-hand information.

**Actions for Social Reinsertion of Women** asked if the EU is conducting follow up on the funds that are allocated, as in some cases, money is not reaching the level where it is needed. They asked if there is monitoring of where the money goes. Regarding peace and security, Central Africa was not mentioned and underlined that it should be because of what is happening in Congo. **Laurent Sillano** underlined that the EU provides a follow up, whether by field visits or conducting onsite checks, as well as audits. Result-oriented monitoring is also employed. **Marlene Holzner** added that the aim of financing is to have a holistic approach, where CSOs are foreseen to see support and finance from different envelopes. She reiterated that the best step is to address the delegations, to see what projects are planned, and what entry point is for CSOs and LAs. A similar approach for the local authority is also suggested, where LAs are encouraged to see where the big Global Gateway flagships in the countries are and then see where the entry point is. **Thomas Kirchner** also clarified that the new borderland programme will include support to the DR Congo and Uganda. The aim is to fight against extremist groups in the region. There are also other ongoing Borderland programmes where support is provided to the DR Congo.

## Group discussions

The participants were divided into sub-groups to discuss the initiatives that are being presented in the AAP 2026 and the implementation of regional Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) in relation to the topics of the group:

1. Human development
2. Democracy, governance, peace and security
3. Migration and forced displacement
4. Green transition
5. Sustainable growth and decent jobs, digital, science, technology and innovation - STI

The discussions were held under the following guiding questions:

- What are the CSOs/ALAs views on the relevance of the regional action plan for 2026 considering the priorities of the regional multiannual indicative programme?
- What lessons can be learned from the formulation and implementation of the SSA regional MIP 2021-2027?

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<sup>1</sup> Further elaboration was provided in the Human development sub-group discussions

- Are there any recommendations in the area of voluntary return and reintegration in SSA (specific to the third group on migration and forced displacement)?
- Are there any recommendations regarding forced displacement (specific to the third group on migration and forced displacement)?

**Please refer to the annex for an overview of the discussions in each sub-group.**

## Report back to plenary

Following the breakout sessions, the rapporteur of each sub-group presented their group's main issues raised as well as the recommendations and conclusions they reached.

### 1. Human development sub-group

The discussions in the group commenced with the clarification on the funds allocated in the field of pharma value chain, which are €55 million, as well as a top-up of €50 million to the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Programme for a further two calls for proposals in 2026 and 2027, and a top-up of €43 million to the Opportunity Driven VET and Skills in Africa action for country-driven skills development linked to Global Gateway Investment sectors as well as enhancing Africa-Europe cooperation around skills development. DG INTPA confirmed that funding for human development has not been depleted.

There was general agreement between the participants on the importance of close cooperation with regional economic communities and supporting both national and regional efforts on the Pharma Action, which will be demand-driven and open to countries that have this as a priority action in their MIPs. The CSOs underlined as well the need for sustained and continuous local government engagement, as well as paying special attention to creating synergies between initiatives that are being implemented and those planned to ensure continuation and building on best practices. In a similar vein, communication was highlighted as an area that must be enhanced, including at the EU Delegations levels, as well as at the country level with relevant actors, including local governments.

On specific themes and areas, the floor expressed support to the TEI on SRHR, including the contributions from both the Commission and MS, with repeated comments on hopes for more funding for SRHR in the coming years. There were also calls to foster co-creation and cultural cooperation between Africa and Europe, with the Commission clarifying that 70 M EUR was made available for this under the Regional MIP (notably for actions engaging at continental level, across Western and Southern Africa, the PALOP region as well as support to cooperation between African and European Museums and support to the audiovisual sector). Enhancing skills was underlined as necessary for the implementation of some of the Global Gateway projects, as well as targeting the issue of quality of work and decent work. The participants also encouraged the ratification of the International Labour Organization Convention No. 190, as well as paying close attention to ensuring that within the skills development, potential for exploitation is addressed.

### 2. Democracy, governance, and peace

In this sub-group, discussions revolved around the shrinking space for CSOs and how the EU would be supporting CSOs working in some of the dangerous spaces, and considerations for actions with regard to protection in light of widespread impunity. The floor engaged as well in discussions regarding the critical borderline areas and the situation in Mali, which also merit attention in the context of actions.

The debate also underlined in many instances the need to emphasise and support the role of local governance structures in peace and security. Another observation commonly raised was about the perceived disconnect between the Delegations at the regional and country levels, and need for better communication. The floor suggested encouraging visits to Delegations, which is relevant for providing timely information and feedback, especially in cases of security and mobility constraints that render mobility of Delegations more constrained. Furthermore, effective inter-agency coordination was considered vital for programme success and transparency.

In terms of specific themes and areas, there was a general agreement on the need to work closer with political actors and political parties. There was specific support mentioned to the consideration of women and youth in political parties, whether from a political or a humanitarian perspective. Electoral observation missions were also underlined as a key area, with calls on strengthening pan-African capacity on electoral observations and how that is going to be done specifically. The participants also encouraged electoral support that includes long-term CSO engagement during and beyond election periods, including to tackle impunity and monitor violations. There were calls for stronger networking, protection, and capacity building for CSOs, particularly in regions facing civic space shrinkage and authoritarian regression. This support should go beyond awareness raising to include practical measures for civil society's safety and effectiveness. In addition, there was support for capitalising on local knowledge from coastal communities and local authorities to ensure inclusive maritime security while avoiding harm and marginalisation. A cross-cutting theme was that all programmes must incorporate local realities, political economy insights, and inclusive approaches to be effective.

Strengthening human rights beyond the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, such as by considering the African Court, and supporting the African Union in their work on transitional justice mechanisms, was encouraged. Supporting the strengthening of institutions, CSOs, and the people of Africa at large, beyond creating awareness, with focus on supporting them in advocating for their own rights in electoral settings and conflict situations was also raised by the floor.

On actions and projects, there was a general agreement on the need for clearer timelines on projects and project cycle management, and clarity on how the funding is going to be channelled and the contractual frameworks in place. The issue of ownership was also addressed, whereby local ownership should extend beyond capital cities to grassroots levels where civic space is often constrained and risks are high. The floor also suggested that nexus projects should be extended to five years and beyond, as results cannot be expected in a year or two. A transversal recommendation was to include political economy analysis within the work done under this area.

### **3. Migration and forced displacement**

The discussions addressed the EU's continued support for migration and displacement across SSA, focusing on ongoing programmes with strategic funding top-ups rather than launching new initiatives in 2026. The sub-group discussion raised concerns over the fact that there were no new actions in the AAP for migration and forced displacement, which was clarified by DG INTPA in the top-up of €100 million for the flexible mechanism for migration and forced displacement, which in turn aims at providing tools and resources for partners. The flexible mechanism supports policy-driven efforts, such as refugee hosting and addressing irregular migration. This approach complements classic cooperation with targeted, adaptable funding to address evolving political and humanitarian needs.

The floor exchanged ideas and recommendations on the complex setting envelope, and on the Sahel strategy in the context of the roundtable dialogue, which will provide additional political guidelines for the use of the money under the complex setting envelope. The floor also discussed the response to the Sudan crisis, where the EU has been responding to the current crisis and to the most recent ones since 2021 with different packages, including

through policy dialogue. The use of the complex setting envelope for Central Sahel funds awaits political approval tied to the EU's renewed Sahel strategy, as explained by INTPA.

On specific themes, one of the areas of interest was the issue of recognising skills and qualifications of migrants, noting the differences between MS regulators on recognising qualifications and skills. Another area of interest was focusing on the issue of missing migrants, and policy dialogue through the Rabat process with the International Committee of the Red Cross in that regard. The group also raised a comment about the general perception that the EU has been focusing more on border management and securing EU borders, which might explain why some grants are rejected when the security aspect is missing. The Commission is exploring how Global Gateway investments in job creation and connectivity can support displacement-affected populations. Migration remains a priority in the multi-annual financial framework, ensuring no de-prioritisation despite shifting EU agendas. On technical aspects, coordination between INTPA and ECHO in the context of the implementation of the nexus projects was encouraged. Regional responses were encouraged in cases of crises, noting at the same time the need to balance short-term humanitarian funding with long-term regional development investments aimed at preventing forced displacement. Concerns were raised with regard to working with governments that are unstable and volatile, whether with regard to refugee protection management, or the reintegration of returnees.

#### **4. Green Transition**

The sub-group discussed concerns about forest conservation and carbon markets, whereby the reality is that in some countries, indigenous people are being displaced from their lands, which is something that should be considered in the programme. The floor called for addressing the issue of landscape and protected areas located in remote areas, which poses a challenge with respect to economic activities developed at scale. The participants also encouraged the integration of wetlands in the different programmes, such as pastoralism or climate displacement.

On climate mobility under a new programme for the Horn of Africa, questions were raised around the adaptation plans, how they are developed and integrated at the local level, and the major gap in anticipatory actions. Food security was also discussed as a concept, defined on the basis of four pillars of availability, access, utilisation, and stability, bridging actions in previous AAPs that addressed food reserve and food crisis. On specific programming, the sub-group members confirmed the strong alignment of last year's 12 recommendations with current and upcoming programmes. They suggested embedding nature-based solutions, locally led governance and ecosystem restoration, especially in Wetlands into Action 4, 7, 9 and 11 which would significantly boost impact while ensuring strong alignment with regional bodies such as IGAD and with initiatives, such as Nature Africa and the Great Green Wall. Coordination between programs like Nature Africa, Pastoralism, and Borderlands ensures complementary actions in overlapping regions. Regarding Natural Africa, participants noted that more focus and emphasis should be placed on conflict sensitivity and human rights in phase 1, while phase 2 will see more resources and partners working on collaborating with the conservation organisations. A common conclusion reached was the importance of integrating local governments and anticipatory actions into climate mobility programmes while acknowledging funding limits at the regional level.

The issue of pesticides was also tackled, whereby participants called on replicating what the EU did regarding banning animal pesticides and monitoring frameworks in that respect in Africa. Several programmes address this issue, such as Zero Plus, which is used to fight against plaque and pests. The floor also suggested addressing safe grounds for crops and agricultural products to ensure they respect the relevant standards with regard to exports from Africa to Europe, where there is a strong control, as well as encouraging it for inter-regional businesses in Africa.

## 5. Sustainable growth and decent jobs

Discussions in the group addressed the issue of cooperation, mostly when it comes to CRM, which was acknowledged as indeed a relevant area under the Global Gateway. However, there are challenges related to unsustainable practices related to human rights violations, gender inequality, child labour, and negative environmental practices. The sub-group members also supported providing an enabling environment for the private sector around the CRM investment and encouraged the replication of successful examples of investment bans that are supporting ESG prerogatives to interiorise social responsibility. One example was making waste management a source of economic opportunity, granting seed financing in this area. They also suggested incorporating the role of local philanthropy and the varied pool of actors that can inform the EU on priorities and key issues to consider in the area of CRM.

Several participants discussed transparency and ESG, underlined the importance of transparency in contracts assigned, and adhering to agree upon ESG standards. They encouraged further work with beneficiary governments and investment banks to ensure transparency in the due diligence process, to ensure that the procedures they are applying are responding to what the CSOs fight for. One concern raised was that trade secrets and customer privacy might hinder information sharing. With regard to ESG, discussions addressed ending the mining projects that are often linked to water contamination. The floor also called for addressing risky jobs for certain segments, for instance pregnant women and children working in the uranium sector and ensuring that these are considered in CRM actions.

A common call was the involvement of CSOs as a first stakeholder, not linked with the private sector, acting as a stand-alone actor talking to the EU and informing it of work done. In the same vein, the floor underlined the need to ensure that when contracts and programmes are designed, CSOs' views are taken into account at the right moment in time to guarantee an impact of their voice. This includes EU actors, whereby there was support for concrete engagement with EU actors that can bring aboard good practices from the EU. The floor also encouraged enhanced coordination between the continental level, the regional level, and the local level to ensure the sustainability of what is being done.

### Wrap up and conclusions

The floor was reminded that written contributions, recommendations, and questions were welcome. An email after the meeting will be sent after the meeting, as well as another consultation season in 2026.

**Laurent Sillano** thanked everyone for their participation in the discussion, noting that the contributions will be collated in order to consider them and incorporate them in the relevant areas. The meeting was closed.

## Annex: Summary of the sub-group discussions

### A. Summary of discussions in the “Human development” sub-group

**Deirdre Lennan, DG INTPA A2**, provided an overview and clarifications of the actions planned under this area prior to the discussions. She referred to the question raised by DSW on the discrepancy in figures in the amounts that have been made available for human development in AAP 2026. She explained that in terms of new actions, there is €55 million allocated for action in the field of pharma value chain. However, they are also topping up two running existing programmes: top-up of €50 million to the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Programme, and have two calls in 2026 and one in 2027, and the top-up for the the Opportunity Driven Vet and Skills in Africa, with €43 million, to enhance the engagement of the continental partners in the area of skills and priority investment areas. Funding for human development has not ended, but execution was effective and reiterated that there has been no decrease in the amount that was foreseen for human development in the course of this financial framework, with remaining funding left for next year. Deirdre Lennan underlined once again that LAs, youth, CSOs, are very much involved in actions, many of which are implemented through call for proposals, and actors are engaged in the forefront in rolling out these actions at country level. She referred to the Youth Mobility for Africa flagship and the Action Support to Public Health Institutes as examples, as well as the action that combined interventions at country level, whereby public health institutes are being supported, whilst bringing them together at regional level with Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) or the regional economic communities.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation raised concerns regarding the recent U.S. offer to partner countries to implement the Geneva Consensus Declaration and the Protego programme, as well as the potential implications of a reinstated Global Gag Rule. They asked about the EU’s capacity to fund sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programmes, and whether support to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to assess the impact on health systems is being considered within the 2026 programming cycle.

Marie Chesnay, Coordinator of the Team Europe on SRHR (INTPA), responded by noting that the United States is indeed currently reviewing its global health approach. She explained that discussions are ongoing among relevant Commission services and the EEAS, with a view to sharing updates with EU Delegations and gathering feedback. She further indicated that reactions from African partner countries have so far been mixed, and at this stage there is no confirmation that negotiations between the U.S. and partner governments have progressed. Civil society organisations were encouraged to engage with EU Delegations and share relevant intelligence to support monitoring and coordinated responses.

**African Culture Fund** asked if there are schemes to involve other sectors into the work done, particularly the cultural sector. **Deirdre Lennan** explained that cultural corporations play a significant part of the programme, noting that several programmes such as Creative Africa were developed to include the cultural aspects. **Ines Alves, INTPA.A.2**, added that €70 million are allotted to cultural aspects, including through partnerships for culture with a continental approach. The general objective of these actions is to foster co-creation and cultural cooperation between Africa and Europe, naming EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture) as an example of many.

**DSW EU** encouraged adding a specific action on SRHR, ideally in 2027, and making sure that SRHR are fully embedded and included in the other actions, including all the actions on pharma that are linked to Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines and Health Technologies (MAV+) with the focus on

affordability and accessibility. On research, they encouraged that it addresses priority diseases that are affecting communities, and build synergies with successful initiatives, such as the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). They asked about who the implementing actors will be when it comes to the pharma action. **Verena Nitschke, INTPA A2**, explained that conversations with different delegations are undergoing to discuss the parties that will implement the different components, and different possibilities are explored, such as twinning between European and African regulatory agencies and research institutes. **Deirdre Lennan** added that the aim is to leverage the MAV+ as much as possible, and the relationship between Africa and Europe in that context, in particular given the withdrawal of the US in recent months.

**FEMNET** referred to actions or investments around enhancing skills necessary for implementation of some of the Global Gateway projects, and whether investments are also going to target the issue of quality of work and decent work, and encouraging ratification of the International Labour Organization Convention No. 190, thus ensuring that within the skills development, potential for exploitation is addressed. **Camilla Kuckartz** explained that the opportunity-driven skills and VET in Africa action (OP-VET) will see €43 million as a top-up. There is also a TA facility which looks at private sector demand and the required skills. The issue of decent jobs will be addressed in investment projects, looking at these criteria and also tracking them as part of the due diligence process.

**Uganda Local Governments Association** referred to the shrinking space for CSOs and underlined the need to support the strengthening of local governance systems, and creating a link between the national and the local government. The role of local government associations is to strengthen governance, as they can place pressure on central governments. They also underlined the importance of regular conversations with delegations on how to contribute to the discourse of good governance.

**FOAPH** underlined that communication must be promoted within the delegation, and within CSOs, explaining that sometimes, when dialogue is initiated, there are issues related to the lack of information on the action plans. There is a need for clarifications on the various instruments and top ups, and keeping all the stakeholders informed to ensure that everyone is on board.

## **B. Summary of the discussions in the “Democracy, Governance, Peace and Security” sub-group**

**Thomas Kirchner** provided brief feedback from some of the main recommendations received from the consultation last year. One was on supporting the human rights dimension in conflict affected areas and to support the implementation of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights resolution. Most of the regional programmes prioritise the protection of human rights, defenders of accountability, and rule of law mechanisms, with dedicated programmes to provide support to the African government architecture. A new contribution agreement is currently being developed with the African Union that will ensure continued support to the entire AU governance architecture through the African Governance Peace and Security Programme, which will respond to this recommendation. Another recommendation focused on supporting countries at national level and implementing peace resolutions and mechanisms. Regional programmes in support of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and SADC (Southern African Development Community) include capacity building activities at country level for national peace infrastructures. In addition, community level mechanisms for conflict prevention are provided through the peaceful and resilient borderlands programmes, which include the setup of local level dialogue and coordination platforms. Furthermore, the EU facilitates the organisation of regular fora for community members, CSOs and provincial and regional authorities.

**European Network of Political Foundations** underlined the importance to continue working on core democratic institutions such as political parties. North American colleagues have effectively stopped doing this kind of work and a huge vacuum has emerged. One of the consequences of this is that many authoritarian governments in Africa are feeling that they can now do whatever they want, such as the non-transparent elections in Tanzania, and stressed that the EU must have a stronger response to this issue. It is important to work closer with political actors and political parties.

**CIDH Africa** referred to the serious situation in the Sahel with ethnic conflicts between ethnicities in Burkina Faso, and Mali, the spread of non-state armed groups and terrorist groups in DRC. They recommended supporting the work of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights especially in the Sahel, and supporting the work of CSOs, including the work of the NGO Forum which gathers twice a year to address peace and security, the rule of law and good governance in Africa. There are many resolutions, but little implementation, and thus, CSOs must intervene and support human rights dialogue.

**World Vision** underlined that it would be very important when a delegation is designated as the lead delegation for a certain initiative, the other delegations from other countries must have access to all the information and updates. Sometimes delegations associated to a programme but not in the lead are not always up-to-date. Therefore, it is key that all the delegations involved in all the countries have the same level of information and have sufficient communication.

**NRC** referred to the actions planned for Central Africa, specifically Ivory Coast and Mali, and asked if it is truly designed to operate on both sides of the border. They asked whether there was a need for the delegation in charge to be based in Abidjan and enquired about the progress being made on the Malian side.

**Care** asked for a clearer timeline on regional projects in West Africa, and how funds are channelled. They also asked whether the contract has direct or indirect management. For nexus projects, especially in fragile and difficult contexts, they believe that four years are insufficient for governance reforms that require mentality shifts, recommending programmes of five years or more for impact and sustainability.

**Thomas Kirchner** reiterated the importance of having stable and democratic countries in Africa for the ambitions under the Global Gateway approach to work out as intended. The €45 million programme is focused on accountability, civic engagement and democratic governance. With regard to borderline programmes, the Borderlands V programme was elaborated and designed in extremely tight coordination with the delegations concerned. Sometimes when it comes to communication between delegations, if there are some weaknesses, it can be linked to possibly some human resource limitations that delegation sometimes, especially in fragile contexts, can face. Regarding cooperation in the context of conflict - ridden areas, CSOs were encouraged to reach out to delegations, which are usually based in the capital and are for security reasons often more restricted to go to the areas where indeed the conflict situation is located.

Meanwhile, **Deborah Guidetti, INTPA**, confirmed that the EU is taking on board the considerations in terms of duration. She underlined that the EU has a nonpartisan approach in efforts to adopt electoral codes of conduct, anti-discrimination measures, and reinforce democratic processes. In terms of actions on the ground, it is hoped that one part could go through regranting with the local partners, including private foundations and possibly also political foundations or local partners. **Giulia Nicoloso, INTPA**, underlined that with regard to the West Africa cluster, the EU is in touch with the counterparts in Bamako. Actions are put together in close consultations with all the delegations in charge. There are bi-weekly consultations with the delegations with Mali and Guinea as well. Support will be extended to several organisations, including the Commission on Human Rights. There

will be two calls for proposals that will be launched next year on Peace and Security and on Governance, launched by the EU Delegation to the African Union, which will be open to CSOs.

**The International Federation for Human Rights** explained that in terms of democratic governance and peace, the three specific objectives that have been proposed quite accurately reflect the persistence of the challenges faced, especially because they are dealing with justice, with electoral processes and the issue of independent press. It seems that a large part of the support is going towards strengthening institutions, which is necessary to help them implement their respective mandates. Regarding specific objective No.1, there may be a need to strengthen the current African Union specific mechanisms in charge of human rights, in charge of promotion and protection. It is useful to see how the African Court would be also involved in all the work done on the AUTJ policy amidst the fight against impunity and also transitional justice mechanisms. There is also a need to strengthen the support for civil society and populations in a regional and transversal approach, because in democracy, elections and peace, they are actually at the core of the violations faced. They referred to using the space to try to strengthen the human rights dialogue between regional, African and international CSOs. Regarding shrinking space, they asked if there are any specific actions that are envisaged to strengthen networking and protection for civil society and HRDs in specific regions. They also asked about the availability of space to support civil society which has been documenting and supporting victims of violations during electoral processes.

**AVSI Foundation** asked about the specific geographical areas regarding the Great Lakes action, adding that given the different dynamics and different factors and actors involved in the conflict in the Eastern part in DRC, a more specific geographical scope or geographical desegregation is important. They also asked about the extent that Borderlands V considers the results and lessons learned from previous borderlands programmes.

**Save the Children International** asked why Mauritania was not among the countries targeted for action 4. They encouraged the consideration of targeting young adolescents in conflict prevention and prevention measures in border areas which deliberately establishes the intersectionality between peace and citizenship education, the economic resilience of young people and women and social cohesion at the community level and dialogue platforms.

**RSF DRC** noted that with respect to the information to be gathered, it is necessary to follow up with people in the field. The data is received at the level of CSOs, but it is important to address how the data is implemented and how to keep the people involved in the data collection informed.

**AVSI Foundation** asked if the peaceful and resilient borderlands V initiative for the Horn of Africa and Malawi and Northern Mozambique will be a new initiative or linked to some ongoing actions, and which will be the delegation lead in charge.

**The International Federation for Human Rights** noted that focusing on AUTJP (African Union Transitional Justice Policy) is important and asked about the plans to support AU mechanisms in charge of promoting and protecting human rights. They are also interested to see how efforts on the AUTJP will be coordinated with existing justice mechanisms and accountability efforts, particularly in situations of ongoing conflict. They also asked about specific actions envisaged to strengthen regional CSOs' networks for elections' observation.

**International Idea** raised a question about the PACED programme and its national component and the regional/continental one. They asked how these two components would relate or work together. There is also an ongoing programme on strengthening Pan African capacities for electoral observation and assistance and asked if the new programme would build on the activities of that programme.

**Cogenta** noted that from their work on local security and governance, reforms are effective when programmes engage with the political economy at the local level. On paper, technical solutions look solid, but in practice, they run against some of the realities of how things actually work. What has seemed to have made a difference is to cooperate with local actors, whether community leaders, artisanal miners, informal security providers, women groups, and so forth. This builds legitimacy and helps identify blind spots, as many of those actors are also operating in shrinking civic space and often at real personal risk. Three things may be built a bit more explicitly into the action. One is the political economy lens, right from the formulation and inception of any programme, a real model of local ownership that is not centred just in capital cities. Another is having flexible support and protection. On the maritime side, maritime security does not last unless coastal livelihood and communities are part of the equation and unless civil military humanitarian coordination is built from the start. In the case of the Red Sea, the situation is even more complex. They asked how this action would make sure that stronger enforcement does not unintentionally harm or marginalise coastal communities who depend on the sea. **Giulia Nicoloso** explained that the EU is aware of the impact that interventions and insecurity have on coastal communities, noting that this particular programme is a very technical one, and there are many counterparts. The law enforcement agencies in the department support safety agencies. However, indirect beneficiaries would be hopefully the local communities, although it is not expected to have direct work with them. The Gulf of Guinea experience would be useful in terms of their knowledge of the security situation. Local authorities remain the main stakeholders, and that is why the EU is looking at working with CSOs when it comes to implementation.

**The Association of Dutch Municipalities** observed that the CSO LA Thematic Budget line is no longer part of the MFF. They asked about how the focus on local authorities is to be ensured, as they play a large role in security, governance, peace dialogue, and peace building on the local level. They are happy to see the role of local authorities in the Global Gateway, but were interested to hear how this works in the new programme on peace, security and governance.

**Deborah Guidetti, INTPA** explained that with regard to the African Court, and in the context of governance and peace and security, the ownership here is with the African Union to take the lead on deciding how many resources will go to each of the organs. The EU aims to continue supporting the institutions in terms of transitional justice. This can be ensured also by the fact that contracts will be dealt with by the EU Delegation to the African Union. The connection also goes both in the direction of the human rights organs, but also with the elections. The current contract on the implementation of the African Union Transitional justice policy is being implemented by a consortium of CSOs led by ICTJ. There is also a re-granting component and it is hoped that such an approach will continue in the future programme. Regarding electoral support, the continental programmes are addressed as a second phase of the current programmes on transitional justice and on the harmonisation of the capacities. There are global funds managed by colleagues in thematic units with regard to human rights defenders, and the EU is aiming to use independent media for resilience protections of journalists, and CSOs that engage in that sphere in a flexible way. On electoral support, the aim is to provide comprehensive electoral support at national level. It means that basically it will be the delegations looking at the programmes which are already being implemented and running in the country, trying to see which are the gaps which are not covered, and devising a specific project aiming also to support civil society in all the different roles in the electoral period.

### **C. Summary of the discussions in the “Forced Migration” sub-group**

**Charlotte Gaudion, INTPA A2** provided feedback regarding some of the recommendations that were made during last year's consultation, focusing specifically on migration and forced displacement. The first one was asking the Commission to emphasise the issue of displacement and the risks faced by migrants in Sahel and North Africa. Part of the AAP 2025 on protection, assistance and solution for fossil displaced populations in SSA is entirely dedicated to displacement and includes the support to IDPs in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso. A new DG was created in February 2025 called DG MENA which deals with the situation in North Africa (and Middle East). There is currently a programme to assist migrants expelled from North Africa to Niger, as well operations on voluntary return and reintegration of irregular migrants for the whole Africa, one covering North Africa and one covering SSA. The Migrant Protection Return and Reintegration Programme specifically deals with assisting migrants expelled from Algeria and Libya in Niger. The second recommendation received was to work with the African Union Continental Operations Centre as part of combating irregular migration, the traffic of human beings and the smuggling of migrants. This is also part of AAP 2025, with continued support to the Regional Operational Centre for the Khartoum process that was based in Khartoum in the past and is now based in Nairobi. Another recommendation was to include minors and unaccompanied migrants and displaced children in different programmes, which is also part of the actions conducted. Actions are tackling different forced displacement crises in SSA, taking into consideration the issue of integration. On the question on the why there was no new action under the AAP 2026 on migration enforced displacement, there is actually a topping up of actions with additional funds, whereby €100 million will be added to the flexible mechanism for migration and for displacement, which is a mechanism that is here to complement what the EU would do in this classic cooperation by supporting policy, politics, and opportunities.

**NRC** raised a question concerning actions related to the Sudan crisis and requested updates in that regard, as well as information as to whether there are future allocations to be considered. They expressed interest in the regional response. **Charlotte Gaudion** explained that there is action for that under the regional envelope, supporting Sudan under AAP 2021 in the area of forcibly displaced population. **Caterina Torchiario, INTPA**, added that for the Sudan crisis, the initial action in 2021 has been adjusted in order to consider the refugees that are in the different neighboring countries of Sudan, but also inside Sudan. Support is both operational and at policy dialogue level. Within the Global Compact on Refugees, there is this possibility to create a support platform for specific refugee crises. A specific platform has been created for the Sudan situation, which is the IGAD platform, in which the Commission provides support in terms of expertise and also in terms of funds. On the more operational side, support is provided to both Sudan IDPs but also Sudanese refugees that are in the neighboring countries.

**The Danish Refugee Council** appreciated the space to have a conversation about regional cooperation and specifically about the Sahel, and referred to the roundtable discussions in Brussels the previous week where colleagues alluded to delays in the implementation of the envelope for complex settings. They asked if the new Saheli strategy will provide additional guidance to the complex settings, specifically for Mali, Burkina Faso and other countries that are now in the complex setting, and the potential timeline. **Charlotte Gaudion** explained that funds have been identified for complex settings, but there is a need for political backing for using this money because of the situation of the EU's dialogue in the Central Sahel. The setup and the use of this fund is directly linked to the approbation of the EU to renew the Sahel approach.

**Terre des Hommes** referred to the top up of €100 million focusing on policy projects supporting migration management, and cautioned the Commission with respect to working with governments that are unstable and volatile, whether with regard to refugee protection management, or the reintegration of returnees. **Charlotte Gaudion** clarified that the flexible mechanism can be used only in countries where there is a relationship, and a political dialogue. In Central Sahel, for example, other means are used.

**ENDA** asked how the EU plans to balance short-term humanitarian funding with long-term regional development investments aimed at preventing forced displacement, including by co-financing climate resilience and youth job creation programmes in vulnerable areas of origin. **Charlotte Gaudion** explained that there is a balance between the short-term humanitarian funding and long-term regional development investments, dealing with the actions of two different Directorates-Generals. However DGs work closely in the capitals and in the field, with delegations and technical assistants in the regional offices. She also referred to the climate resilience programmes, and regional funds for SSA within the 2024 AAP with a first cluster in the Great Lakes region and a second cluster in the Indian Ocean region.

**PFD-TA** raised a question regarding recommendations in the area of return and reintegration in SSA. **Charlotte Gaudion** noted that the aim is to support the protection, return, and reintegration of migrants, which is put in place before the return. Within the framework following the return, support will be provided in the regions chosen for return, focused on the relevant dimensions, including the psychosocial dimension.

**ENDA** enquired about the concrete regional initiatives to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications and skills (including informal skills) of migrants between African countries, thereby encouraging legal professional mobility and reducing the pressure of irregular migration. **Caterina Torchiario** explained that each MS has its own system for the recognition of qualifications, adding that this is a cross-cutting issue that is not necessarily dealt with only in the field of migration, but also with colleagues who deal with education issues

**NRC** asked for an update to the follow-up action regarding the Cross-border Programme for the Promotion of Sustainable Solutions to Displacement Situations in Cameroon and the Central African Republic (CAR).

**Danish Red Cross** underscored the need to prevent and address the plight of missing migrants and respond to the needs of the families of deceased migrants, notably by recognising this widespread but underreported humanitarian tragedy and the necessity for public authorities in the EU and Africa to jointly act to prevent and address it. In this respect, the ACHPR Resolution 486 on missing migrants and refugees in Africa could serve as a basis for the development of interregional initiatives between Africa and the EU to address this issue.

**NRC** stated that they are implementing a grant in response to displacement between Cameroon and the Central African Republic. They asked whether there is going to be a follow up within this, hopefully under the multi annual financial framework. **Caterina Torchiario** referred to the second phase under AAP 2025 in that area, and last week there was a meeting between the different partners on this. For the second phase, no decision has been made yet regarding whether they will continue with the same consortium or not.

**Terre des Hommes** referred to the increasing securitisation of migration management instead of focusing on protection and addressing the root causes of displacement and irregular migration. Often what they see in projects that are selected is about that security aspect of managing irregular migration flows to Europe instead of addressing the root causes. They asked about discussions at that level and how this is taken into consideration, as sometimes, grants are not selected because they do not focus on security. **Charlotte Gaudion** explained that there are two TEIs in SSA tackling the issue of migration and forced displacement. They are along the main routes toward Europe, so the Atlantic, the Western Mediterranean and the Central Mediterranean routes. Following an analysis of the situation on those routes, one of the main key findings was the issue of protection, which garnered a lot of interest and importance. Border management indeed gets a lot of attention, and involves work with law enforcement agencies.

**NRC** noted that displacement is not a priority under the Global Gateway, and asked whether this is a challenge to maintain this priority in the agenda. **Charlotte Gaudion** clarified that aside from Global Gateway, the Commission will continue to work on migration and forced displacement. Global Gateway is very driven by investment, but linkages can be created, such as using Global Gateway investment in terms of job creation. There is no disconnection and there is no deprioritisation either.

**Danish Red Cross** noted that one recommendation would be to address missing migrants and also to respond to the needs of families whose family members have deceased. Maybe that could serve as a basis for development of inter regional initiatives for Africa and the EU to address the issue. They referred to a multi-country case study on NCDs in humanitarian settings, where the continuity of medicines is very crucial. This NCD financing is often excluded in the humanitarian appeal. They added that it would be good to have long term predictable funding that can complement the humanitarian emergency and care in emergency settings. **Charlotte Gaudion** clarified that under the Rabat process there is a specific initiative to have a network for missing migrants. There is now a new cluster of work on missing migrants as well, which involves having in each country covered by the Rabat process one focal point for missing migrants within the national authority. Regarding non communicable disease, this is not really something that is looked at in the migration and forced displacement angle, but could be discussed with colleagues dealing with health, as there is a priority in the regional MIP on Human development that includes health.

#### **D. Summary of the discussions in the “Green Transition” sub-group**

**Nadia Cannata** referred to the question on the nexus approach and how to connect actions. She explained that this year is focusing on the Horn of Africa, noting however that the EU aims for a comprehensive approach once all the actions will be up and running, all of which contribute to climate and mobility. Programmes that act in the same regions are formulated together, implemented in coordination so that they are complementary. There was a recommendation last year on food security instead of markets, whereby work addresses both aspects, working with farmer organisations on investments on agriculture, market access, and food security. There was a question on ensuring that climate change is looked into and addressed, noting that there is a TI on climate adaptation and resilience in SSA. Regarding paying further attention to human rights, Nature Africa is being developed in the second phase to be much more structured on these aspects. Efforts are exerted to strengthen the aspects related to conflict, sensitivity and human rights by providing technical assistance to be able to anticipate issues and having a hotspot to share best practices between different areas. There was a recommendation on water sanitation hygiene in programmes, noting that work on transboundary water involves work on governance, knowledge, capacities, and livelihoods and investments. Another recommendation was to expand agriculture in conservation areas and to connect Nature Africa with concerns on livelihoods, which was fully taken on board. There was a question to build capacities to support agroecological transition, which is also linked to the question of pesticides. A lot is done also through bilateral cooperation, as well as work on sanitary fetusanitary issues. Encouraging landscape approach was one of the questions that came up last year.

**Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)** highlighted the importance of anticipatory action at the local level, which is being explored in the global network of civil society, Organization for Disaster Reduction. The interaction between the national services, the decision makers, and the local communities has a huge gap in that interaction which must be fixed at some point. They suggested supporting that sector to improve the warning system. They also requested further elaboration on the concept of food security, as it is a challenging issue.

**VNG International** raised a question about the role that local government authorities can play in green transition and also the relationship with CSOs in this regard.

**Gauthier Schefer, INTPA**, explained that on anticipatory action, this has been a constant concern in the implementation of the climate change specific envelope. So the 300 million in the regional MIP are dedicated to climate change adaptation and resilience in particular, positioning efforts at the regional level more and more on the issues related to climate mobility and displacement. The EU has tried to address as much as possible the nexus between humanitarian development and peace, basically trying to integrate all the funding at the regional level for the development of data and early warnings. The biggest challenge when it comes to early warning systems is making sure that they are able at the end of the day to be channelled to the communities in need.

**Gianpietro de Cao, INTPA**, explained that with respect to food security, work is done on the four pillars of availability, access, utilisation and stability. The majority of the programmes on food security have been associated with relief and emergency situations. Precision is another programme for West Africa, working on the IPC, which is the integrated phase classification tools to monitor and follow all the extreme situations in the region and to help different actors to respond. Pastoralism works on availability, access, and stability as well.

**Gauthier Schefer** added that the EU supports actions related to droughts. The EU is a historical supporter of the African risk capacity, and channelled some funding to the African risk capacity, contributing as well to the global shield against climate risks.

**WWF EPO** raised a question on the Climate Mobility Action Document, and how the action concretely supports the implementation of NAPS and NDCS in each country. They also asked how local authorities would be supported to integrate climate mobility into local development plans, and whether there were any plans to develop an impact monitoring framework to track and measure progress across the countries. They asked if they could share their input in a given template.

**WWF EPO** referred to action 7 and asked how the action concretely supported the implementation of NAPs and NDCs in each country. They also asked how LAs will be supported to integrate climate mobility into local development plans, and whether there were plans to develop an impact monitoring framework to track and measure progress across countries.

**Wetlands International Europe** stated that the regional action plans strongly align with the priorities of the Regional MIP, particularly their focus on climate resilience, peace and security and green economic development. Their relevance would be further strengthened by explicitly integrating wetlands. They would like to see explicitly integrating wetlands and water ecosystems as core assets for the green transition and as foundation for sustainable livelihood, climate adaptation and conflict prevention across the Great Lakes, the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa. Coordinated management of transboundary wetlands, river basin and rangelands is essential for addressing climate related fragility, supporting mobility and pastoralist systems and ensuring food and water security. They recommended embedding nature based solutions, locally led governance and ecosystem restoration, especially in Wetlands into Action 4, 7, 9 and 11 which would significantly boost impact while ensuring strong alignment with regional bodies such as IGAD and with initiatives like Nature Africa and the Great Green Wall.

**Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa** underlined that pesticide ban could be useful, as the EU has banned highly hazardous pesticides and this could be replicated in Africa. In terms of forest conservation, it would be good to see stronger action there in terms of preventing communities, particularly indigenous peoples and pastoralists being chased violently off their lands in the name of conservation and in the name of tourist investment. One of the outcomes of the People's Summit was that Global Gateway was becoming much more extractive, despite being a framework of decarbonising the EU economy, underlining at the same time the effect

this has on Africa, keeping it dependent on raw commodity exports. They encouraged driving European funding towards African small scale food producers, workers and communities.

**Gauthier Schefer** explained that regarding climate mobility, the activities are designed based on the integration of NDCs and NAPs, because they are basically designed in consultation with the relevant ministries of the national government. In the case of the other regional responses to the climate displacement programme, all the relevant ministries were asked for their input. There is a plan on integrating it, especially as the EU is already supporting data systems at a regional level and at national level on climate mobility. Meanwhile, **Antoine Saintraint, INTPA**, explained that in the different programmes, there is an aspect of restoration of ecosystems in the watersheds. However, there is no specific programme as such for wetlands. **Nadia Cannata** added that there is an increasing focus on nature-based solutions which at the moment is not reflected in specifically regional programmes for SSA. This is more of a global programme to test different types of investments that can be done on nature-based solutions. This is also an interesting angle to look at wetlands. On pesticides, there are two elements. The first one is when export commodities towards the EU are addressed, there is also a lot of pressure to lower the use of pesticides that comes from DG SANTE from the very simple reason that containers will be destroyed once they arrive in Europe. But this is particularly focused on export. There is a strong incentive for governments to put in place strong systems to control systems of certain value chains. On the other hand, by using this support to strengthen the systems, the EU is doing its best through the programmes to strengthen the systems for local consumption. There is a lot of work done through the agroecology with Centres of Excellence on the continent to promote practices to work with farmer organisations so as to be able to really reach also the local level and not stay at the only structural ministerial level.

**WWF EPO** expressed appreciation of the opportunity to feed into the formulation and identification of several action plans, noting that these processes seem to vary on a programme-by-programme basis, and the understanding of certain stakeholders of how to feed into the process also seems to vary. They noticed that EU consultants and EU delegations are unfamiliar with how to turn formulation results into the correct funding modality. They asked to share a schedule of upcoming formulation missions with partners in a given topic in a transparent way, and to make the interview process more systematic.

**World Vision Germany** expressed appreciation to see how the recommendations from the last year have been adopted in this new action, adding that it was discouraging that last year had eight actions right under Green transition, and this year only four, and asked about the reasons for this. Regarding Natural Africa, they asked about the most suitable implementing modality for CSOs, and whether it will be country-specific or a multi-country approach will be followed. They also asked about synergies and coordination with Global Gateway flagship projects.

**German Red Cross** asked about what is expected under Action 7 regarding linkages with anticipatory actions and with what is already done or funded by many organizations.

**Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)** noted slow progress on two environment SDGs. They underlined the importance of the Nature Africa programme, and stated they are happy to see it will continue to be supported, especially given the context of the pullback of funding from the US and some other donors. There is an increased interest in developing the aspects of economic development and green economy, but often these areas, which are really important for biodiversity, are in places which are very remote or where there are the most vulnerable communities. Therefore, the activities in these programmes could link more closely to other priorities such as security and resilience. Pastoralism is another complex and important issue to address. **Nadia Cannata** noted that economic development investments will be promoted depending on the situation on the ground. There are some landscapes where it is possible to make closer links with Global Gateway Investments, such as green

corridors or energy investments or major roads and infrastructure that would allow some value chains to be developed. In other areas this will not be possible. The type of answer will be very much tailor made to the reality on the ground. It is also necessary to make best use of what is under development on the biodiversity credits.

**AVSI** asked about the kind of synergies that are planned with the Global Gateway initiatives and the green corridors. They added that one of the key limits in the green global gateway is that if communities are not able to leverage and utilise infrastructures, there will be no much development at the level of the community. They asked how the Natural Africa project can be leveraged and make sure that the initiatives that are in the project can really leverage other bigger infrastructure initiatives.

#### **E. Summary of the discussions in the "Sustainable growth and decent jobs" sub-group**

**Karina Dzialowska, Agapitos Hatzipetros and Antonescu Alexandru, DG INTPA**, briefed the floor on the recommendations received in 2024, including ensuring that standards of the EU are upheld, ensuring the competitiveness of African farmers, encouraging responsible business conduct in Africa, and confirming the inclusion of trade unions. Early country assessments were received, which allowed the facilitation of selecting the countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Uganda, Kenya, Cameroon, Angola, Namibia, and Zambia), as well as the five implementing partners (ILO, ITC, OCHR, UNDP and OECD). When it comes to the best way of implementing the activities, the EU is in the process of negotiating the description of actions, hoping that in the coming weeks a concrete idea of the list of activities will be devised. Another recommendation was regarding enablers to sustainable trade and investment, noting the focus is both on the regional and continental levels. This is still in the inception phase, defining a list of CSOs that are directly interested and considering the best modality to implement that component. It is unclear if it will be through a call for proposals or not, and the floor was invited to share their views in that regard. One last recommendation was making better use of this platform to see how the meeting is used to gather feedback and recommendations.

**WECF International** referred to CRM, which is a very difficult area and linked to conflicts, and human rights abuse, and encouraged working with CSOs in the extractive industries transparency initiative. The aim is that contracts are disclosed, and clear placement of responsibilities is available, making sure that there are no human rights abuses or environmental destruction. They underlined the need for full disclosure of contracts, with focus on human rights, gender equality, and environmental protection. The wording can also be modified to ensure that initiatives come from CSOs as key stakeholders, not only from the private sector side. **Karina Dzialowska** noted that from the point of view of community engagement around the CRM projects, there is the question of how the communities use the local funding they are receiving from the company and must push for more transparency regarding new sources of funding at the community level. She underlined that indeed, transparency in contracts is a key issue, noting that for instance, in the context of the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative, the government publishes contracts signed with the economic operators that are given license for mining. There are a lot of discussions internally to make it more transparent and publish the due diligence processes that European banks are undergoing before they decide on projects. **Antonescu Alexandru** added that from the digital trade perspective in East Africa, efforts are exerted to bring the Estonian experience in Europe, and follow the bottom-up approach, which ensures transparency. .

**Commonwealth Local Government Forum** underlined that decent jobs and inclusive economic growth is at the core of the mandate of local government, which is something that local government associations at a national and regional level are working towards. They encouraged making linkages between regional economic objectives down to national objectives, and local government objectives. They also referred to interlinkage around Global Gateway priorities of transport corridors in CRM, and how local governments need to be a partner in the

localisation of those processes. They underlined that there is indeed a place for the local component in the regional programmes.

**WINGS** raised concerns about the local community level foundations that represent communities and how they are going to be involved at the delegation level. They noted that it was interesting to hear about responsible business conduct and including trade unions and involving CSOs that include small foundations that are embedded in those communities, as well as micro and small medium enterprises in the Global Gateway. Regarding ESG, voluntary principles have their limits, whereby one of the criticisms is the limited information on how the EIB in the Global Gateway is going to share information in light of trade secrets or customer privacy, which limit the willingness to share data. They expressed interest to hear how foundations can get involved in Global Gateway and provide capacity to CSOs on the ground to be involved in the project, as well as technical assistance to the government. Another issue is to involve local civil society and community foundations, such as local philanthropy. An example was The Chandler Foundation working with the Malawi government, which published contracts for e- procurement with a bottom-up approach.

**WECF International** underlined the importance of responsible business conduct and the due diligence experience in Tanzania with the KfW Bank, which tries to introduce gender transformative principles and guidelines for their work. The CRM area is very prone to sexual and gender-based violence. It is important to look at the gender and the child rights protection in this sector, as well as the environmental part owing to the contamination created by this activity. They underlined that transparency of contracts after they have been negotiated as well having e human rights, environmental and gender experts during the negotiations of the contracts from the beginning.

**WINGS** noted that the JETP in South Africa was launched to support the country's energy transition from coal to renewable energy is supported by the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP), including Ikea Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and Bezos Earth Fund, which contributed \$20 million to leverage private sector investment. One groundbreaking study on the role of local philanthropy within the government fiscal framework of the South African JET-P found that job creation solutions were developed with philanthropic capital stepping in to close the gaps.

**AVSI** raised a question regarding making relations between sectors, such as CRM and TVET, and the role of CSOs as a bridge with the private sector and the local communities. **Karina Dzialowska** explained that the thematic units have launched an opportunity-driven call for proposals, with the aim to recruit locally, or try to integrate artificial miners in the formal jobs. The idea is that companies should share transparently how many jobs can be created locally, what jobs they are looking for, and what kind of skills are needed. The EU will provide the training together with the training institutions. The EU also wants to invest in processing and refining; there is a need to engage in technology transfer on those processing and refinery methods and build skills locally to be able to do it. The aim is to build a pool of highly specialised experts.

**Karina Dzialowska** shared an example from Finland, which takes the deposit from mines in Tanzania, ships it to the laboratories in Finland, artificially age those deposits and use technologies to recycle the waste in a way that it does not stay at mine level, but is used progressively. This is the type of partnership being developed with the European experts in the mining processing field.

**WECF International** referred to the uranium mining in Namibia, where they had a very strong gender equality regulation, and they encouraged women to engage in the uranium mining. However, uranium mining, even in the best conditions, remains highly toxic for everybody. They added that while it is encouraged to generate gender equality, this should be considered in such highly toxic jobs, especially for pregnant women.

**World Vision Germany** suggested considering gender and child protection as cross-cutting issues throughout the six specific objectives mentioned in the programming.