

Africa Regional Meeting of the Policy Forum on Development: Dakar-Senegal, 03rd-04th October 2016

On October 3rd-4th 2016, the Africa Regional Meeting of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD) took place in Dakar, Senegal. The meeting mobilized 74 representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs), associations of LAs (LAs), the private sector, representatives from the European Commission and the Delegation of the European Union to Senegal.

Welcome: Mr. Khalifa Ababacar Sall, Mayor of Dakar, Mr. Jorge Balbis, (ALOP) and Mr. Joaquin Gonzalez Ducay, Ambassador of the European Union to Senegal, welcomed the participants and reminded that 2016 is the year to begin with the implementation of important global agreements, including Agenda 2030. In that context, CSOs and LAs have to continue pursuing the central role they should play in development policy processes. In an analogy, it was said that if Governments are geologist, more interested in the structures, LAs and CSOs are the topographers that go more in depth, playing multiple roles as independent drivers of development processes, working with governments to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities, fighting for gender equality, supporting the delivery of services, fostering social and economic empowerment and guaranteeing the full implementation of human rights. In addition, it was underlined that “think Global and act local” shall not remain a motto. On the contrary, it needs to become a reality. In that sense, the PFD was valued as a consensus-building and consultative process for the involvement of CSOs and LAs and this Africa Regional Meeting welcomed as a practical example of a strong and truly inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Partnership.

PFD Overview: What is the PFD and how does it support African participation of CSOs, LAs, the private sector and other stakeholders? Introduced and moderated by Sifa Chiyoge and Jean Pierre Mbassi, African representatives of the PFD Task Team, the objective of this informative working session was to provide an introduction about the PFD and present an update of the main PFD activities taking place, including the Joint Position paper on the relevance of inclusive multi-stakeholder approaches to implement the SDGs. The African representatives of the Task Team explained how the PFD is a mechanism to explore ways to improve development policies and programmes, contribute to effective development cooperation; and promote a better dialogue with EU bodies, directorates and units. PFD is thus recognised as a multi-stakeholder space that contributes to strengthening partnerships and mutual understanding. In this perspective, the participants recognised that multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSHP) have an increasingly important role to play in the international development architecture. Participants agreed that the PFD is a good initiative to promote a stronger engagement and ownership by all the stakeholders involved.

The Global Scene: How to collectively influence the new global agenda – the African perspective? Moderated by Ibrahima Cheikh Diong (Africa Consulting and Trading), Emmanuel Akwete (Institute for Democratic Governance); Malick Gaye (Environment and Development Action in the Third World) and Thera Korotimi (Coopérative Féminine pour la Protection de l'Environnement) were in charge of providing information and inspiring the debate about the three highly relevant meetings for the Development community that will take place during the last months of 2016: Habitat III, (Quito, 17th-20th Oct. 2016); COP22 Low Emissions Solutions Conference (Marrakech – 7th-18th Nov. 2016); 2nd Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation high-level meeting (Nairobi Nov 28th-Dec 1st 2016). Two elements were broadly emphasized. On one hand, the importance to ensure that there is information sharing between the different key players about the upcoming conferences. In that regard it was highlighted that the African key players need to make sure that these different competing projects are harmonised, adapted to the African context and, as a result, shape an African position. On the other, the speakers mentioned the implications that those conferences will have for Africa. It was stressed that the continent needs capacity building, transfer of know-how to develop the necessary capability, particularly in regards to climate adaptation, otherwise it is very unlikely that the continent will be able to live up to the commitments made in those conferences.

An enabling environment for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Africa. Introduced and moderated by Patrice Lenormand, (European Commission); this session had a panel composed by Nelson Agyemang (Consultant PFD report Ghana); Esther Gicheru (Cooperative University College, Kenya); Ebrima Sall, (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) and Anetha Awuku, (International Organisation of Employers). The objective of the session was to share perspectives on Africa's role and experience in the implementation of Agenda 2030, with a particular focus on enabling environment. Both panellist and participants made reference to the different understandings of what an enabling environment is or should be. For participants from the private sector, an enabling environment includes elements such as

economical stability, proper legal frameworks and no corruption. For CSOs, a considerable part of it refers to how to overcome restrictive laws and administrative constraints to be able to do their work. Despite the differences, they agreed on the importance of Agenda 2030 as a useful framework to promote an enabling environment and, in that regard, allow CSOs and LAs to fully participate in the achievement of the SDGs. In that sense, it was highlighted that, while both CSOs and LAs have a key role to play to actively contribute to the goals and target of the new development agenda, a necessary step is to link better national development agendas with SDGs since a gap remains between structural and infrastructural needs and SDGs ambitions. After the panel, the working groups elaborated further on this aspect.

WORKING GROUP: What are the challenges for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Africa? Participants were divided in three groups, according to their language of preference. In this working group, participants were asked to identify the key factors that encourage (positive) or prevent (negative) the implementation of Agenda 2030 at country level. On the negative side, several statements were made, including: the SDGs have been deprived from the MDGs/aid effectiveness experience on implementation because of lack of transparency and openness, a limited or non-existent participatory space for stakeholders and a lack of collective ownership, lack of coherence due to different ministries dealing with different SDGs, and lack of integration of the SDGs in local politics. On the positive side, participants stressed that there is an increased access to multi-stakeholder platforms for SDG implementation, that Agenda 2030 offers a unique occasion for CSOs and LAs to bring their experience and networks to SDG implementation and, ultimately, the opportunity to gradually synchronize 2030 Agenda and 2063 AU Vision. When asked if there are trends at regional level, participants said that SDGs have become a point of reference for many countries and this is likely to encourage a certain degree of harmonisation between countries and regions. Despite that, regional trends were difficult to find since the factors identified previously (both positive and negative) are not representative of the whole African reality.

The EU and Africa: towards a renewed partnership. The objective of this session was to discuss the main elements that will determine the future of the relationship between the EU and Africa, including the future partnership with the Africa Caribbean and Pacific group beyond 2020. It was moderated by Achieng Akena, (Centre for Citizens' Participation on the African Union) and speakers included Anne Cecile Coly (International Trade Union Confederation); Ousseine Diallo (Fédération des Organisations patronales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest); Rigo Belpaire (European Commission); Donald Deya (Pan African Lawyers Union) and Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi (United Cities and Local Governments Africa). This session included a videoconference with representatives of the European Commission in Brussels and had two main parts. The first one gave details about the developments in regards to the current ACP-EU post 2020 and the EU-Africa summit that will take place in 2017. Participants were updated on the EU's position to the renewal of the EU-Africa partnership. In this regard, one of the main findings of this session is the need for African countries to have a more consistent and unified position, particularly on what they want to achieve from the negotiations. The second part concentrated a considerable amount of attention on the role of CSOs and LAs and, more concretely, on remaining challenges in the construction of more inclusive partnerships and the need to develop mechanisms that could be taken by CSOs and LAs in order to play a more active role in the future relationship between the EU and Africa. In that regard many proposals were made by the audience, including how to facilitate links between peers in Africa and Europe to build African capacity, an increased degree of information and knowledge exchange to guarantee accountability in Africa and in Europe, to develop more training and communication materials to unlock information and, eventually, how to encourage a broader participation of organizations, etc.

WORKING GROUP: How should the EU step up its efforts to achieve policy coherence for sustainable development? Participants were divided again in accordance to their preferred language and, in this working group session, they pointed out three dimensions of policy coherence for sustainable development: horizontal (policy sectors), vertical (across actors) and through partnerships. The need for better relations at different levels of government was clearly expressed. At the same time, a more participatory approach to the relation between citizens and governments, including the engagement of CSO in the national plans was suggested. In addition, the relation with EU should stimulate the previous and find synergies with both the 2030 and AU 2063 agenda's. The EU should assist Africa's processes for democratic transition and economic transformation. If external trade is a priority for the EU, it should be focus on coherence: fair taxes, terminate waste dumping, etc. The EU should also avoid duplication in its assistance. For that, the EU must capture and analyse country priorities, particularly in dialogue with organisations that are working on particular issues. In regards to how should the EU strengthen its partnerships with CSOs and LAs to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda there was unanimity in the fact that the EU should recognise the role of non state actors and support their involvement through development assistance to achieve development goals.

A new paradigm in Development Cooperation: Fragility and migration. This session was moderated by Ibrahima Aïdara (Open Society Initiative for West Africa); and panellist included Patrice Lenormand (European Commission); Richard Danziger (International Organisation for Migration); Abdoul Aziz Diallo (International Committee of the Red Cross) and Frederick Muia (International Organisation of Employers). The objective of this session was to learn about the increasing engagement of ODA in fragile settings and the resulting challenges for cooperation actors, including how to reduce the spiral towards increased fragilisation and migration. Estimates portray that today a third of the world's poor live in fragile and conflict-affected states and this is likely to increase to nearly two-thirds in 2030. In Africa, according to the participants, despite the recent progress noticed in terms of democracy, peaceful transition and positive economic indicators such as in Botswana, Ethiopia and Rwanda, there is a lack of engagement of the governments in terms of conflict prevention and resolution. Africa is occupying 60% of the UN Security Council agenda. Migration and fragility in Africa can be mainly seen as the direct consequences of democracy recession and growing social inequalities in the continent. Participants discussed the multi-faceted nature of the problem of fragility and warned from establishing a direct correlation between fragility and migration. They also commented that achieving the vision outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires efforts to restore confidence in peaceful politics, transform institutions and ensure that excluded sub-national populations or groups, including the poorest of the poor, are more integrated into national economies and decision-making processes.

Taking stock of the Africa Regional PFD: conclusions and recommendations. During the session, Sifa Chiyoge and Jean Pierre Mbassi, African representatives of the PFD Task Team, presented the main conclusions and recommendations of the event. A Plenary Debate followed the presentation and all participants had the opportunity to contribute to the final document.

Closing. The closing session included words from the PFD co-Chairs as well as CSO and LAs. The concluding remarks highlighted the good work the PFD is accomplishing to help CSOs and LAs in Africa occupy their place and play their role in the policy debate and in the dialogue between the EU and Africa.