

# Continental drifts in a multipolar world

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ECDPM's annual Challenges Paper seeks to identify the important debates of the coming year and to sketch the backdrop against which these will unfold. The aim is to offer perspectives on the change processes at play in Europe and in Africa and the impact on their relations.

More than a year after the 2017 AU-EU Summit in Abidjan, formal political engagement on the Africa-EU partnership seems to have stalled, both sides engrossed in more immediate concerns. The African Union (AU) is exploring new partnerships and taking unprecedented steps towards continental integration, in economics, politics and institutions. Meanwhile, the European Union (EU) is confronting a rather different dynamic – one that divides its membership on these very same themes.

In Africa, the impetus for continental integration has never been stronger. African leaders made several groundbreaking decisions in 2018 to expedite the AU's institutional and financial reform. The coming year will test the weight of its member states' commitment to partially self-finance the AU, to promote intra-continental trade through the new African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and to make good on the pledge to 'Silence the Guns' by 2020.

In Europe, calls for a united, stronger Union, able to navigate the issues of the day continue to be constrained by the rise of nationalist, protectionist politics in some member states. In addition, several European processes will coincide in 2019, creating a 'perfect storm' that will determine the Union's future engagement on the world stage. Among these are the European Parliament elections, the negotiation of the multiannual financial framework (MFF), the culmination of Brexit and the negotiation of a successor partnership agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states.

These ongoing institutional and political processes and dynamics will influence the ability of the AU and EU to work together on issues of common concern in a spirit of partnership between equals.

Yet, there are windows of opportunities to revamp the EU-Africa partnership in 2019. This paper examines some of those and looks ahead at what to expect in the coming year. We pay particular attention to converging and diverging interests, across member states, between the member states and their respective continental organisations – the EU and the AU, and between the two continents themselves.



## Setting the scene

In his State of the Union address in September 2018, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stressed the need for a new “partnership of equals” between Europe and Africa. While he is not the first European leader to call for a radical shift in Euro-Africa relations, Africa’s prominence in the address was noteworthy. Described by Juncker as Europe’s twin continent, Africa is now higher on the EU’s political agenda than at any time in the past 20 years. This is largely due to the political crisis around migrants and refugees and the fallout from the instability created by conflict and regime changes in the Maghreb and Sahel.

Prompting this European shift is a growing assertiveness of African governments, institutions and citizens. Africa is seeking more global influence, pursuing this through stronger continental and regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and regional economic communities (RECs). Economically, Africa is the second fastest growing region in the world. Intra-African trade is set to expand through the AfCFTA, now well underway. Africa is home to a burgeoning middle class, with a rising demand for consumer goods and services and growing access to the internet. It also has budding light manufacturing and innovative tech industries. Nonetheless, Africa still confronts major inequality challenges and is still not creating enough high-quality jobs for its youth.<sup>1</sup>

Africa and Europe are well aware of the urgency of speeding up Africa’s economic development to provide opportunities for its booming youth population. To this end the EU has launched major initiatives to foster an economic partnership with Africa. One of these is the recently unveiled ‘Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs’. This so-called alliance is essentially a European initiative, hardly discussed with African partners before its release. This brings into question its real ownership and the extent it represents a renewed EU commitment to Africa as an equal partner.

The growing influence of China in Africa, especially in infrastructure, trade and development finance has hastened the EU to revisit its approaches and catch up with Africa’s aspirations. Moreover, the rapidly shifting

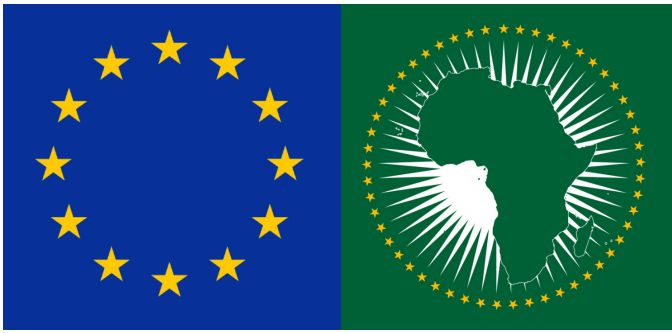
and unpredictable world has formed a strong driver for the EU to renew its partnership with Africa. Pressing challenges, not least climate change, demographic shifts, geopolitical instability, security threats and migratory pressures, are putting the EU’s and the AU’s response and adjustment capabilities to test after test.

Both parties are committed to effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order. Yet, intensified attacks on multilateralism through increased unilateral measures and withdrawals from international agreements, shifting alliances and growing tensions between the United States of America (USA), China and Russia, make for a highly volatile setting for international cooperation.

**The EU and AU see a useful partner in each other, not just by virtue of their proximity and shared interests, but also because they have chosen a similar path**

As multilateral constructs, both the EU and AU suffer from the questioning of multilateralism in a way that other big powers do not. Hence, the EU and AU see a useful partner in each other, not just by virtue of their proximity and shared interests, but also because they have chosen a similar path. Both seek to build a political and economic entity capable of confronting globalisation and standing firm amid the other major global players. Although the two unions differ in structure and mandate, both face similar strains. Institutional bottlenecks and rigidities, lack of implementation and follow through, as well as internal divisions and political blockages constrain their capacities to play the role of a convening power. This is aggravated by a growing disconnect between the stated ambitions of these continental bodies and the diverse interests and positions of their respective member states on key issues such as regional integration and budgetary contributions.

In this sense, integration and disintegration forces are active on both continents. These will certainly influence the ability of the two bodies to work closer on issues of common concern and in a spirit of partnership between equals. Can a new model of collaboration provide an anchor for the EU and Africa in today’s tumultuous international relations? ■



## Drivers and constraints of EU and AU global ambitions

The EU and AU have both independently reaffirmed their ambition to become stronger global actors.

The EU has produced a range of bold and innovative policies and strategies for development and external action, including with regard to Africa.<sup>2</sup> Two years since its adoption in 2016, the EU Global Strategy is still proving to be a valuable compass, providing a realist perspective on EU engagement with the rest of the world. However, its overall external action framework remains fragmented and Europe's global leverage is declining as the EU still struggles to live up to its ambition of 'principled pragmatism'.

The EU's movement towards a more interest-driven external agenda conflicts with its self-declared 'soft power'. However, reconciling values and interests is difficult when the EU must compete with other global powers for access and influence in Africa. This is compounded by the increasing volatility of domestic politics in Europe, a seemingly unstoppable swing to the right and strong Euroscepticism. Some have argued that the EU is in a permanent state of crisis, not least on migrants and refugees, Brexit and right-wing populism. But the EU has proponents as well. Strong believers see the EU as a last defender of multilateralism, value-driven foreign relations and international cooperation.

Many African states, for their part, are harnessing the benefits of the multipolar world. The continent is tapping into the changing global order, partnering with powers such as China, Japan, Turkey, the Gulf States and Russia - with the first ever Russia-Africa Summit due to take place in Moscow in 2019. The AU is pursuing major financial and institutional reforms, presenting itself as a revamped continental organ poised for more global influence. However, it too confronts internal divisions and institutional limitations that weigh down its ability to articulate interests collectively.

### A crucial year for the future of the EU

In 2019, several European processes will coincide, creating a 'perfect storm' that will set the course of the Union's future

engagement in the world. Among these processes are the 2019 European Parliament elections, negotiation of the multiannual financial framework (MFF), the culmination of Brexit and negotiation of a successor partnership agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states.

European Parliament elections and renewal of the Commission

May 2019 will see the election of a new European Parliament, followed by the selection of a new European Commission President, College of Commissioners and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, alongside a new president of the European Council and the European Central Bank. This will do much to determine the EU's political direction in the next five years. Certainly it will have a strong bearing on the end stretch of ongoing processes regarding the MFF, Brexit, post-Cotonou and the EU-Africa partnership.

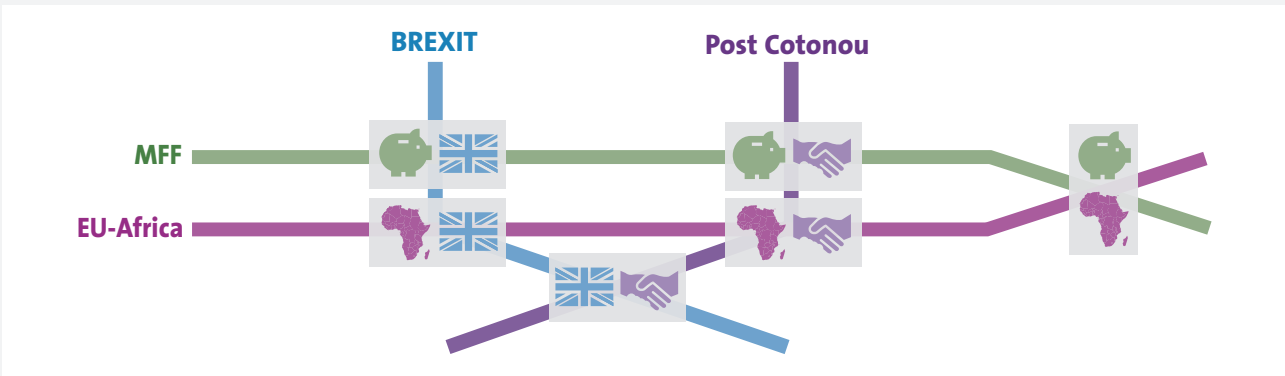
The *Spitzenkandidat*, or lead candidate procedure, is expected to be used again in 2019. This means that based on the results of the parliamentary elections, the lead candidate of the winning party group will become President of the Commission, after being formally proposed by heads of state and government and elected by the European Parliament. The real question perhaps is not whether the next parliament will be dominated by the political right or left, but whether the mostly pro-European parties will be able to hold their majority over the Eurosceptics.

**As multilateral constructs, both the EU and AU suffer from the questioning of multilateralism in a way that other big powers do not**


National contexts will be the largest determinant of European Parliament election results. Explicit challenges to the "authority of Brussels" are afoot in many EU member states. Some are calling for reversal of the integration process. Even among the more moderate voices, shifts in domestic politics could have a growing impact on the EU's foreign and development policy priorities and the balance struck between EU values and interests. The rise of populism across the continent, and its potential to disrupt the status quo, has caused cracks to appear in EU integration and unity.

Nonetheless, opinion polls and surveys confirm steady and even growing support for the EU among European citizens. The parliamentary elections will thus resonate as a truly "European" debate about the future of Europe, opposing promoters and skeptics of European integration and setting the political stage for Europe's priorities and dynamics in the years ahead.


# SOME CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR EU-AFRICA RELATIONS AS KEY PROCESSES INTERACT




## MFF

**Post Cotonou**  Will the European Development Fund (EDF) be budgetised?  
How much within the MFF will go to Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific?

**EU-Africa**  What will be the final amount agreed for Africa in the MFF directly (geographic allocation) and indirectly in Heading 6 (H6) and the European Peace Facility.

**Migration**  How strongly will migration feature in the final MFF agreement for H6?  
What linkages and coordination mechanisms between H6/NDICI and the funding for the external dimension of the EU's migration and asylum policies (under a new Heading 4)?  
What role will development and cohesion funding play in incentivising cooperation on migration issues?

**New Commission**  How far will the new Commission want to see its priorities for Africa reflected in the MFF agreement?

## EU-Africa


**Brexit**  Will the EU and Africa be interested in a specific associate membership in the Africa pillar of the CPA for the UK?


**Migration**  To what extent will migration issues dominate the EU-Africa agenda crowding out other thematic policy areas?

**New Commission**  Will the new Commission leadership and HRVP prioritise Africa?  
What will the new priorities for Africa be?

## Post Cotonou


**EU-Africa**  Will the African pillar of Post Cotonou Agreement define EU-Africa relations overall and will North Africa countries be happy with that?

**Brexit**  Will the EU and ACP be interested in having the UK as an observer / associate member in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) – how meaningful will this be?


**Migration**  How strongly will migration figure in the negotiations? Could difficulties with migration scupper a deal?


**New Commission**  Will the new Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development and High Representative Vice President (HRVP) continue to follow the same path on CPA as before?

## BREXIT

**MFF**  Will the loss of the UK mean less focus on Africa in the MFF?

What desire will the EU have to 'crowd' in extra funding for Africa from the UK – what compromises / agreements might it be willing to make on MFF governance?

**Migration**  Migration has been cited as one area where the UK would like to retain a close working relationship with the EU – how would this work?

**New Commission**  Will the new Commission want to open or close down space for future EU-UK collaboration on Africa?



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One of the first tasks of the newly elected MEPs will be to hold hearings for the candidate Commissioners before they are formally approved. This will happen following the Parliament's first session, after the political groups and parliamentary committees are formed between June and September 2019. Another early task will be to finalise the EU's next long-term budget, or multiannual financial framework (MFF).

#### Budget negotiations

Negotiations on the EU's 2021-2027 budget were launched in May 2018 when the European Commission presented its package of proposals to the Council of the EU and European Parliament. The Commission is pushing for swift agreement on the MFF and the coming year will be pivotal in the debate. The positions taken will signal the level of EU ambitions and the means that member states and the Parliament are prepared to put behind them.

### **The Commission has put forward bold proposals that could gird a more strategic EU engagement with the rest of the world**

According to the reviewed Commission's timeline,<sup>3</sup> maximum progress should be achieved on MFF negotiations in time for the Informal EU Leaders' meeting in Sibiu, Romania, on 9 May 2019. A political agreement on the MFF is due before the European Council in October 2019. This would allow adoption by the Council by the end of 2019 after the consent of the new European Parliament. Yet, as with most high-stakes EU processes, the specifics are likely to be resolved in the eleventh hour, perhaps as late as November and December 2020.

The Commission has proposed increasing the MFF from the current €1,087 billion for 2014-2020 to €1,279 billion for 2021-2027 in current prices. It has a solid narrative to justify greater spending, aligned with the Union's post-2020 political priorities. But a number of member states have already voiced reluctance to increase their national contributions to compensate for the gap left by Brexit. Moreover, Eurosceptic and populist movements strongly object to any expansion of the EU budget.

The Commission has put forward bold proposals that could gird a more strategic EU engagement with the rest of the world.<sup>4</sup> To start, it has asked for a €123 billion new Heading 6 called 'Neighbourhood and the World'. This would correspond to a 13% real increase in budgetary resources for external action, compared to the 2014-2020 commitments. This proposal underlines the traction that external action has gained in recent years.

The Commission has also proposed a major innovation for a more streamlined, coherent and flexible financing of EU external action: the new 'Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument' (NDICI). The NDICI would group together a number of financing instruments, amounting to €89.2 billion distributed between different envelopes. It would also contain a substantial reserve to allow the EU to respond swiftly to unforeseen events. The NDICI reflects the EU's aim for a more strategic, political and interest-driven external action agenda, in which the various dimensions of EU external action complement one another.

While financial allocations to the different regions are still provisional, 80% of the proposed NDICI geographic envelope would be concentrated on the EU's neighbourhood (at least €22 billion) and sub-Saharan Africa (at least €32 billion).<sup>5</sup> A major innovation is that the NDICI would incorporate the off-budget European Development Fund (EDF), under which EU assistance to ACP countries is financed. This budgetisation of the EDF could have implications for the level of funding for sub-Saharan Africa, though Africa would probably not lose out from the new instrument. Given the size of the EDF (€30.5 billion for the 2014-2020 period), budgetisation will likely be a major pressure point between the EU member states and the European Parliament in the MFF negotiations.

The unfolding negotiations will determine the weight given to EU interests and values into the future external funding, and their compatibility of EU action with sustainable development objectives. Programming will determine the specific prioritisation and funding that particular themes and countries receive under the NDICI. While the programming process is not technically part of the MFF negotiations, it will have to be launched in 2019, once the new European Commission takes office, in order to be finalised by 1 January 2021. On this date the new MFF becomes operational.

The EU's external financing encompasses a wider external investment framework through which the Union leverages additional resources, including from development finance institutions and the private sector. In its proposal for the next MFF, the Commission foresees the establishment of a European Fund for Sustainable Development 'Plus' (EFSD+) to extend the size and geographical coverage of the current External Investment Plan (EIP). The idea is to create a more coherent and effective financial architecture for external investment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as outlined in the Commission's Communication of September 2018.<sup>6</sup> A broader endeavour to support this is the proposed revamping of the development finance institutions, possibly with better alignment of their mandates and modes of operation. One of the options under consideration here is the establishment of a European development bank or alternative institutional arrangement. In 2019, a high-level 'group of wise persons' is expected to submit its comments on a joint proposal by France and Germany regarding Europe's financial architecture for development.<sup>7</sup>

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The proposal to create the NDICI has met opposition from some member states and in the European Parliament. The overall governance and structure of the NDICI remain the main sticking points. Several stakeholders are advocating to maintain separate instruments. In particular, continuation of a separate EDF, European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) has been argued to better protect funding and preserve the political visibility of policy priorities in particular thematic and geographic areas. However, preserving too many separate instruments undermines the logic of consolidation.

Likewise, positions on the proposed increase in funding for EU external action, and for Africa, are still uncertain. Unless a fairly united front can be formed, maintained and defended, the heading is likely to suffer disproportionate cuts in the upcoming negotiations. In the previous MFF negotiations too, the external action heading suffered the largest cuts from proposal to final outcome. The concerns raised on Heading 6 and the NDICI will therefore likely be resolved as part of the inevitable trade-offs to curtail proposed budget cuts under other headings, such as agriculture and the cohesion policy. The proposed external action architecture and financial envelopes are thus far from settled.

Questions around migration can also be a stumbling block in the MFF negotiations. Key aspects under discussion are how sufficient resources will be made available to address migration in the future budgetary cycle and what instruments the European Commission needs to effectively deliver on the European Agenda on Migration. This concerns, in addition to the abovementioned Heading 6, the newly proposed Heading 4 'Migration and Border Management', which includes the proposals for the Asylum and Migration Fund and the Integrated Border Management Fund.

The way migration is integrated in the Commission's MFF proposal is very much based on experience from the 2015 'migration crisis', when the EU budget came under significant pressure to address the influx of people. Integrating migration priorities within the MFF,<sup>8</sup> reveals diverging positions among the member states on how best to address the issue. The stakes are high, due to the strong interests involved and member states' request that the Commission "deliver adequately on leaders' priorities" in this area.

A final important innovation was introduced by Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; that is, establishment of an off-budget European Peace Facility (EPF) worth €10.5 billion. This proposed envelope is nearly three times the amount spent in 2014-2020 through the African Peace Facility (APF)<sup>9</sup> and Athena mechanism.<sup>10</sup> This has raised questions about 'spending pressure' and absorption capacity of partners, though the geographical scope of the EPF is much broader than Africa.

The rationale for the EPF is to step up EU solidarity in financing joint military operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and to support peace and security capacities of partner countries or organisations. The EPF reflects the EU's increasing appetite for strengthened security and defence capabilities to become a more prominent and strategically autonomous global player. The proposal thus broadens EU military and defence support abroad, which has largely been restricted to channelling assistance through regional and continental organisations, and geographically limited to Africa.

**The EPF reflects the EU's increasing appetite for strengthened security and defence capabilities to become a more prominent and strategically autonomous global player.**

The EPF proposal allows for direct support to individual countries, including lethal equipment. The EU has also considerably strengthened member state cooperation on defence and security matters through, for example, its Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund. Stronger cooperation on defence and security is further reflected in the Commission's proposed defence budget, which for 2021-2027 is €13 billion.<sup>11</sup> That amount would cover joint capability development and innovation in this domain. This too will be reviewed by the European Council in early 2019. In addition to hard security and defence, there is an ongoing – though comparatively limited – effort to step up EU member states' commitments to civilian capabilities for crisis management through the Civilian CSDP Compact adopted in November 2018.

## **The AU's pursuit of institutional reforms**

Africa, not just Europe, is seeing change in its institutions. It is making serious effort to assert the financial independence of the AU, to promote intra-continental trade and to achieve some of the aspirations enshrined in the continent's Agenda 2063.

In 2018, the AU further implemented its institutional and financial reforms led by Rwandan President Paul Kagame, as both AU chair and head of AU reforms.<sup>13</sup> Planned for completion in 2019, AU reforms are structured in five broad areas with progress achieved in several areas, less so in others (see infographic on page 8). The reforms articulate a resolve for Africa, through the AU, to become a major world player. However, the AU's ambition has

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## The consequences of Brexit in international development affairs

At the time of writing, the UK is scheduled to leave the EU on 29 March 2019 yet political turmoil in the UK continues. The manner in which the UK leaves the EU will set the tone for future collaboration and that is absolutely not clear. Both sides are interested in maintaining a productive working relationship post-Brexit, including on foreign and security policy as well as international development cooperation. The European Commission has not yet come forward with detailed proposals on how a future relationship could be continued in international cooperation and development. The UK has produced several ‘non-papers’<sup>12</sup> and has signaled its interest in maintaining a good relationship, including potentially co-financing activities with the EU in areas such as humanitarian support, migration, and security and peace, as well as in Africa and the Neighbourhood as geographic priorities. On development cooperation, the draft ‘Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the EU and the UK’ comes closest to what the UK government expected from the EU. This document indeed echoes some of the requests made by the UK as it allows the EU and UK to “cooperate closely in third countries, including on [...] development projects” (art. 98) and also leaves the door open for UK funding (art. 99).

But this is just a draft political declaration, and international development cooperation considerations seem very far from the top of the Brexit agenda. Discussions on technicalities of international development cooperation, Africa and UK engagement in the EU budget, will not be directly negotiated between the EU and UK before the ‘big exit’ issues are sorted, especially the Irish border issue. The most significant question is post-Brexit whether there will be technical and political space created for the UK to continue to be related to EU decision-making and spending decisions abroad, including in Africa – perhaps by a ‘voice without a vote’ – and what will be the price for that.

There are also broader questions on the potential impact of Brexit on EU foreign and development policy. The UK, along with France, Germany and the European Commission, has traditionally been one of the ‘big four’ shaping EU development policy. France, Germany and the European Commission will likely seize the political space. Yet, it will be difficult for them to completely fill the gap left by the loss of UK expertise and evidence-based ideas, as well as to make up for the UK’s advocacy on issues such as the least developed countries, fragile and conflict-affected states in Africa, and gender. This constitutes an opportunity for other member states, and new or renewed alliances, including the Franco-German axis, the Likeminded Group, or the EU-13, to invest in intellectual leadership on these and other thematic or regional areas. The profound impact of Brexit on EU development cooperation will take longer to discern. Yet clear indications will most likely appear during the negotiations on the next EU budget, the future programming of EU aid, and negotiations for the follow-up to the Cotonou Agreement.

been taunted by internal divisions and opposition. For example, some member states worry that a strong AU could dilute their standing in regional and international diplomacy. The 32<sup>nd</sup> ordinary session of the Assembly of the AU which will be held on 10-11 February 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, will be an opportunity to take stock of the progress accomplished and decide on the way forward. To improve its financial autonomy, the AU introduced a 0.2% levy on eligible imports to provide 75% of its programme funding, 100% of its operational budget and 25% of its peace support operations budget by 2020. Proceeds will also go to endow the African Peace Fund. Twenty-four of the 55 AU member states are at various

**The AU is pursuing major financial and institutional reforms, presenting itself as a revamped continental organ poised for more global influence**

stages of implementation of the levy and 14 are currently known to be collecting the levy on eligible imports. At the August 2018 African Leadership Forum, President Kagame reminded AU member states that finance is but one aspect of a much bigger transformation process of the pan-African institution. The AU will continue to rely on external funding in the foreseeable future. Therefore, efforts will continue to be needed by the AU and its core donors – including the EU, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway – to improve the quality of their partnership and support to AU programmes and the institutional reform agenda.<sup>14</sup>

### Subsidiarity

One of the items on the 2019 agenda is to define the principle of subsidiarity which governs the relationship between the AU and RECs.<sup>15</sup> The exact meaning and terms of subsidiarity have not yet been spelled out, nor is there a consistent division of labour between the AU and RECs. While various frameworks currently guide the relationship,<sup>16</sup> legally, politically and financially, the RECs are independent organisations with specific mandates and accountability towards their respective memberships. The AU reform agenda seeks to clarify the

REFORM AREA	RECOMMENDATION	ORIGINAL AU TIMELINE	RELEVANT PROCESSES (AS PER JANUARY 2019)
<b>Continental priorities</b> 	1. Focus AU on fewer priority areas.	From July 2017	Areas identified: political affairs, peace and security, economic integration (e.g African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Africa's global representation and voice.  AfCFTA negotiations ongoing.
	2. Conduct a professional audit of bureaucratic bottlenecks and inefficiencies that impede service delivery.	July 2017 - July 2018	1st AU-REC Coordination meeting to be held in July 2019 (previously planned for July 2018).
<b>Institutional realignment</b> 	3. Complete professional audit of bureaucratic inefficiencies.	July 2017 - January 2018	Audit under consideration.
	4. Establishment of a lean and performance-oriented senior leadership team at the African Union Commission (AUC).	January 2018 - January 2019	AU recruitment process to be strengthened as envisioned in the administrative reform roadmap (2018-2021).  AUC to align all relevant legal instruments by February 2019.
	5. Re-evaluate the size and capabilities of AUC structures to deliver on the agreed priorities.	January 2018 - January 2019	New AUC structure will have 8 members: Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and 6 Commissioners (will come into effect at the end of the current tenure of the AUC in 2021).
	6. Review and update the mandate and structure of AU organs and Institutions in alignment with agreed priority areas.	July 2017 - January 2019	African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) mandate extended.  New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) transformed into the African Union Development Agency (AUDA)
<b>Connect the AU with citizens</b> 	7. Establish women and youth quotas; ensure private sector participation.	July 2017 - January 2018	Quotas by 2025: 50% women; 35% youth. African Economic Platform established.
	8. Establish African Youth Corps; facilitate cultural and sports exchange.	January 2018 - January 2019	From 2018, AU Member States to fully finance the Youth Volunteer Program and the Junior Professionals Program.  AU members to fund African Youth Fund.
	9. Identify and provide new continent- wide public goods and services.	July 2017 - January 2019	e.g. Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) launched.
	10. Make the African passport available to all eligible citizens.	Not included in implementation matrix	Guidelines for the design, production and issuance of the African Passport to be adopted by AU Assembly in 2019.
<b>Operational effectiveness and efficiency</b> 	11. Limit AU Assembly Summit agenda number of summits - the Assembly to hold (1) ordinary summit annually and extraordinary sessions if needed.	From July 2017	One AU Assembly Summit planned from 2019.
	12. Review and focus on external partnerships that prioritise Africa's developments.	From January 2018	AU has formal agreements with the Arab world, EU, South America, India, Turkey, China, USA, Japan, Korea and Australia.
<b>Sustainable financing</b> 	13. Fully implement Kigali Financing decision.	January 2017 - January 2019	24 countries in the process of implementing the levy, 14 countries collecting levy on eligible goods in 2018.
	14. Adopt complementary measures to reinforce financing decision.	July 2017 - January 2019	F15 Committee established. Golden rules developed.  Sanctions for non-payment strengthened namely: cautionary, intermediate and comprehensive sanctions.

Source:  
<https://au.int/AUReforms/areas>  
<https://au.int/en/AUReforms/implementation>;

[https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/34634-assembly\\_au\\_dec\\_690\\_-\\_712\\_xxxi\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/34634-assembly_au_dec_690_-_712_xxxi_e.pdf);  
[https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/35378-ext\\_assembly\\_dec\\_1-4xi\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/35378-ext_assembly_dec_1-4xi_e.pdf)  
<https://au.int/en/continent-and-country-partnerships>



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relationships, both vertical and horizontal, between the AU, RECs, regional mechanisms and AU member states.

Kagame's report on reform implementation proposes replacing one of the two annual AU Summits with an AU-REC coordination meeting. The first such meeting is scheduled for 30 June-1 July 2019 in Niamey, Niger. It is to shed light on how the AU, RECs and regional mechanisms, with their respective member states, will relate to each other in terms of hierarchy, accountability, comparative advantage, jurisdiction, subsidiarity and harmonisation of laws. Some have suggested vertical coordination, with the AU at the top playing a coordination and harmonisation role. Another option is a more horizontal coordination that gives primacy to the RECs in most areas while the AU plays the more strategic role of monitoring and evaluation.<sup>17</sup>

An AU-REC framework document, possibly with provisions to ensure compliance, would help establish the division of roles and responsibilities, particularly as they relate to regional and continental integration. Yet, establishing formal rules for applying the subsidiarity principle will not suffice to promote its consistent interpretation and application in a wide variety of concrete and often conflictual contexts. For this, numerous institutional and governance weaknesses will also have to be tackled, alongside the financing of multi-level agendas.<sup>18</sup>

**African Continental Free Trade Agreement**  
African countries took a significant step towards continental integration with the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The AfCFTA, which is one of the flagship projects of the AU's Agenda 2063, seeks to create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of persons, and thereby promote expanded intra-African trade and enhanced industrial competitiveness of the continent. It will integrate 55 African economies, many of which are too small to attract substantial investment alone. Once fully implemented, the AfCFTA will harness a market of over one billion people and a combined gross domestic product of more than €3 trillion.<sup>19</sup>

The AfCFTA was adopted at an extraordinary AU Summit in March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda. Forty-nine AU member states have signed the agreement, but Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, is among those that have not. The ratification process has now begun, with 22 ratifications needed before the agreement enters into force.<sup>20</sup> To speed up ratification, the AU has launched an advocacy campaign inviting all countries to establish national AfCFTA committees to help fast-track the process and mobilise relevant stakeholder engagement.

The AfCFTA negotiations have not been without challenges. Crucial issues from the first phase of the negotiations are still pending, including schedules of concessions and rules of origin for trade in goods and specific commitments on the liberalisation of trade in services. It is hoped that these issues will be resolved by February 2019, ahead of

the next AU Assembly. The negotiating countries will have to decide which tariff lines to designate as 'non-sensitive', 'sensitive' and 'excluded' from liberalisation under the AfCFTA. An anti-concentration clause has been proposed to prevent countries from excluding entire industries from tariff liberalisation, as this would defeat the AfCFTA's objective of boosting intra-African trade. The AfCFTA rules of origin comprise a hybrid approach with both general and product-specific rules, though the latter are still being negotiated. This mixed approach reflects disagreements between countries favouring stricter versus more flexible rules of origin. Complex rules of origin, however, may disadvantage countries that lack the technical expertise to monitor the rules.

### **African countries took a significant step towards continental integration with the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area**

Despite these outstanding issues, countries are moving ahead in 2019 with the second phase of the negotiations on competition, investment and intellectual property. The aim here is to expand the scope of the AfCFTA and address 'behind the border' trade issues arising from the interconnected markets envisioned by the agreement. Broad consensus will be needed on the appropriate level of ambition in the AfCFTA for its ratification and effective implementation in African states. This process will need to include sufficient consultation with domestic stakeholders, private sector actors in particular, as they will be key in ensuring the AfCFTA achieves its objectives. Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou, as head of the AfCFTA, is expected to submit a progress report to the AU Summit in February 2019.<sup>21</sup>

The EU has increased its support to the AfCFTA negotiations from €7 million (2014-2017) to €50 million (2018-2020), including institutional and technical assistance for data gathering and analysis.<sup>22</sup> This support is in line with the EU's pledge at the Fifth AU-EU Summit to support the establishment of the AfCFTA and the AU Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade.

Alongside the AfCFTA negotiations, other key trade developments are underway, both at the REC level and with external partners. The AfCFTA will build on, rather than replace, the regional trade arrangements of Africa's RECs. Hence, progress on these will continue to matter in promoting intra-African trade. External trade discussions include those on the economic partnership agreements (EPAs) between African regions and the EU. The EPAs could reinforce the goals of the AfCFTA by supporting regional

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value chain development and the building of trade capacity in African countries. However, some research suggest the opposite, that EPAs may “hurt intra-African trade, weakening trade revenues and undermining trade-driven industrialisation in Africa”.<sup>23</sup>

## **EU-AU partnership stranded in the ACP-EU framework: A missed opportunity**

The EU and AU have repeatedly agreed to raise their games and take their partnership to the next level. Yet, the ongoing negotiations for a successor to the ACP-EU partnership agreement so far indicate that the two regions remain trapped in a conservative mindset.

In May and June 2018, both the ACP Group and the EU formalised their respective negotiating mandates on the future agreement. The AU and several EU member states had pushed for a single continent-to-continent agreement between Europe and Africa outside the ACP-EU framework. However, the negotiating parties ultimately agreed to continue their partnership through the ageing but familiar ACP-EU format. While this has the advantage of continuity and a degree of certainty, this framework is not fit for a relationship between Europe and Africa, because it fragments and dilutes interactions across bilateral partnerships.<sup>24</sup>

**Many African states were reluctant to give the AU a clear mandate to negotiate on their behalf and represent Africa in the post-Cotonou negotiations.**

In some areas, the AU has legitimacy, value added and proven experience in engaging with Europe. Yet, many African states were reluctant to give the AU a clear mandate to negotiate on their behalf and represent Africa in the post-Cotonou negotiations. Their choice, however, should not be seen as an automatic endorsement of the leadership of the ACP, but rather a clear preference for an intergovernmental approach, at the firm leadership of member states. This is a missed opportunity for the continent to think and act in unison. Some African states were not in favour of a strong continental approach, and others saw the AU’s push to lead the negotiations as a threat to their own interests vis-à-vis the EU. Their interests, they contend, can be more easily defended and controlled through the ACP construction.

Going forward, a key question for the negotiations will be what role the AU could play as a non-party to the Cotonou

agreement. While the ACP member states do not foresee a future political role in the partnership for the AU or RECs, the AU could support member states in the negotiations, which will likely include a compact covering the whole of Africa. Many EU member states want to keep the door open for the AU to step in during the negotiations, and some have called on the ACP to reorganise its negotiating teams along geographic lines rather than thematically.

If organised along geographic lines, to what extent and how will North African countries be involved in the African pillar? The March 2018 Kigali Declaration of the AU Executive Council called for the inclusion of North Africa in a single and indivisible continent-to-continent partnership that recognises existing agreements with the EU. However, neither the ACP Group nor any North African country has yet expressed an explicit position on the issue. The role played by the Egyptian Presidency of the AU in 2019 will be particularly important in following up on this.

All these processes will largely unfold in 2019, though the EU and AU have far to travel to make good on their respective ambitions and be strong global players. Nonetheless, the EU and AU are already stepping up their collaboration on common priorities in important areas. ■



## **EU and AU collaboration on common priorities**

**On the global scene, both the EU and AU have re-emphasised their commitment to multilateralism and to work together under the United Nations (UN) and in other international institutions. This will require their enhanced cooperation in multilateral fora on cross-cutting priorities such as the SDGs, gender equality, climate, peace and security and migration.**

To this end, important declarations were made in the margins of the 73<sup>rd</sup> UN General Assembly in September 2018. First, the EU and UN agreed to strengthen their partnership on peace operations and crisis management,

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and on sustainable development. On development, the renewed partnership seeks closer collaboration and common policy approaches in five focus areas: gender, growth and investment, climate, migration, and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.<sup>25</sup> The EU with the UN also aims to create a more strategic framework for cooperation in partner countries. Yet, it remains to be seen how these political declarations will be followed through in practice in a country-specific manner.

Second, the AU, EU and UN held their third trilateral meeting during which they reaffirmed their joint commitment to promote an effective multilateral system and reinforce synergies and coordination in tackling global challenges.<sup>26</sup> They agreed to put their partnership on peace and security on a more solid and structured footing. Further trilateral meetings are envisaged on at least an annual basis to take stock of progress and guide further cooperation.

## **Implementing and linking the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

A primary area of cooperation is implementation of the SDGs, which is being monitored yearly at the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The next HLPF, in July 2019, will be an important milestone on the path to 2030, as it will bring the first four-year review. For this occasion, a heads of state and government segment is also to be held in September 2019 in the margins of the 74<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly.<sup>27</sup> The EU, alongside 42 countries, including 16 from Africa and three from Europe, will submit their first voluntary reviews. The EU's review will build on the first Joint Synthesis Report on the implementation of the European Consensus on Development, which is planned for the first half of 2019. That exercise will provide a first assessment of the support provided by the EU and its member states for achievement of the SDGs in partner countries.

In Africa, a key challenge is to link the SDGs to Africa's own Agenda 2063. To accelerate implementation of the two agendas, African countries have called for the organisation of a thematic 'Africa day' in the margins of every HLPF. The idea is to provide a platform for African countries to advocate for their priorities and articulate and sharpen a common African position. A concurrent aim is to encourage peer learning and development of tools for integrating the SDGs into national and regional policies and international support measures.

Meanwhile, the mandate of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has been expanded to include the monitoring and evaluation of both agendas.<sup>28</sup> The APRM will start with a focus on the governance aspects of Agenda 2063, such as good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, and justice and the rule of law. SDG 16, on peace justice and strong institutions, will also be central

here. However, since the APRM is voluntary, some countries could be left out of this monitoring and evaluation process. To date, 37 of the AU's 55 members have acceded to the APRM, and 21 have been peer reviewed.<sup>29</sup> The APRM is expected to present an update on the state of governance in Africa to the AU Summit in 2019.

## **Gender equality**

Last year, in the margins of the 31<sup>st</sup> AU Summit in Mauritania, the EU and AU held a high-level dialogue on the role of women as a key force for political, social and economic development, including for achieving all the SDGs. Both reiterated their resolve to accelerate efforts to support gender equality and women's empowerment, and to deepen existing commitments in this area. Both organisations are addressing gender equality internally as a matter of institutional reforms and as a policy priority.

The AU recognises gender equality as a fundamental human right and as integral to regional integration, economic growth and social development. It declared 2010-2020 the 'African Women's Decade' and has taken significant measures to enhance the gender sensitivity of the AU and its institutions, including following criticisms in an internal inquiry conducted in 2018. Several countries in Africa have passed laws and constitutional amendments to prohibit, or at least curb, gender-based violence. Yet, the mid-term review of the African Women's Decade<sup>30</sup> confirmed that gender-based violence continues to be a serious problem throughout the continent, perpetuated by cultural acceptance, lack of legal protection for women and weak law enforcement.

**The AU recognises gender equality as a fundamental human right and as integral to regional integration, economic growth and social development.**

Advances have been made in women's political representation and participation across Africa. Female representation in parliaments has risen in countries such as Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa.<sup>31</sup> In late 2018, Ethiopia elected its first female president and appointed a gender-balanced new cabinet, including for the first time a female minister of national defence, and a new female minister of peace. Despite these highlights, female heads of state or government and female ministers of foreign affairs continue to be rare.

The EU is also committed to promoting gender equality within its member states and around the world. In September 2017, the EU and UN launched the Spotlight Initiative, a

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## The AU and gender

The AU is set to launch its Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment on the margins of the February 2019 AU Summit. The AU Commission will report annually on progress towards implementation of the strategy, including on progress in aligning its programmes, activities, funds and reports to its objectives. It will also report on advances in streamlining policy platforms on gender equality and women's empowerment, in line with the ongoing AU institutional reforms. A key element of this strategy is monitoring and reporting of AU member states' implementation of the Solemn Declaration of Gender Equality in Africa (2004). The monitoring and reporting will be done through a "gender scorecard" which will be presented at the February 2019 AU Summit, and every two years subsequently.

The issue of gender parity has been centrally placed as part of the broader AU institutional reforms. This has been concretised through a decision by the AU Assembly calling for gender parity among AU personnel by 2025. To achieve this goal, the AU Commission has validated a five-prong plan: (i) revision of existing host agreements, staff rules and regulations, and development of workplace gender guidelines; (ii) putting in place gender-supportive administrative systems including flexible working practices and services; (iii) instituting targeted human resources processes to enhance existing recruitment, appointment, promotion and retention practices; (iv) a focus on women's professional development; and (v) necessary management and monitoring systems to oversee progress and earmark budgets towards the goal.

The commitment to ensuring gender parity in AU institutions has pushed wider discussions on the importance of women in AU peace support operations, including ensuring greater participation and placement of women in leadership positions. Further, at its extraordinary summit of November 2018, the AU decided to continue to apply gender parity at the level of commissioners, and now between the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson positions.<sup>32</sup>

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global and multi-stakeholder partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Through this initiative, they are working closely with several countries in Africa, including Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Joint activities will take place with the African Union, and programmes in Africa will focus on sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices (such as female genital mutilation), to be implemented throughout 2019.

Within the EU, the European Commission has defined a 2016-2019 strategic engagement framework for gender equality, including an action plan on tackling the gender pay gap. Beyond its frontiers, the EU has reiterated its commitment to make gender equality and women's empowerment a priority and a key driver for sustainable development. To this end, it developed the 2016-2020 Gender Action Plan (GAP II) to provide a framework for the EU and its member states to promote gender equality and women and girls' empowerment in partner countries, as well as in international fora. GAP II has given the EU strong impetus to push an institutional culture shift and systematically integrate gender into its various instruments and policies. Some progress has been made towards increased management, ownership and leadership of the commitments under GAP II, and there is greater support for gender mainstreaming within EU institutions. Yet, more needs to be done to achieve the target of mainstreaming gender across 85% of all new EU initiatives by 2020, with a particular focus on areas such as security and migration.

In 2019, preparations will likely kick off for a third gender action plan, building on lessons learned and tackling

remaining challenges. Supporting equality and women's rights will feature as one of the main thematic priorities of the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU in the latter part of 2019.

In December 2018, the EU launched its new 'EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security'. This followed a year-long review, led by the EU/EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender (PAG), of the EU's 'Comprehensive Approach to implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security'. This could provide an opportunity to increase synergies with the EU gender action plan, such as on joint monitoring and reporting in line with resolution 1325 indicators. Currently, while conceptually closely interlinked, the EU's gender action plan and the EU's approach to the women, peace and security agenda have been institutionally rather separated between the EEAS and the Commission. The newly adopted Strategic Approach to women, peace and security is expected to remedy some of that separation.

The issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is integral to any action on gender. In both the EU and Africa, SRHR remains a divisive issue but also an area with the potential to catalyse action on health, wealth and women's rights. 2019 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, which was instrumental in advancing both gender equality and SRHR as a human right. At the same time, the post-Cotonou and MFF negotiations will define future investments in SRHR, either helping or hindering continuation of the progress made.



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Will the next EU budget be gender sensitive and provide the means necessary to put commitments into practice? The current MFF proposal makes few explicit references to gender equality as a key political priority, and no details are yet provided as to how gender mainstreaming would be undertaken, either internally or externally.

## Climate change

As shown by the hard-reached yet mixed outcome on the Paris Agreement ‘rulebook’ at the COP24 conference in Katowice in December 2018, implementation of the Paris goals is proving hard to realise. Continuation at the current pace will not keep temperature increases below two degrees Celsius, let alone fulfil the 1.5 degree Celsius goal. The latest International Panel on Climate Change report warned that without radical steps, global warming will be irreversible.<sup>33</sup> New pledges are needed before 2020 to reach the goal of US \$100 billion annually for climate action. The UN Climate Summit in September 2019 will be an important milestone on both accounts.<sup>34</sup> Strengthening and rebuilding alliances, including between groups in Africa and Europe, must be a priority in 2019 to get the Paris Agreement on track and raise ambitions for future action. To succeed on this in the consensus-driven UN climate forum, the EU needs Africa.

The 2018 Climate Change Vulnerability Index classifies two thirds of African cities as facing “extreme climate risk”.<sup>35</sup> The implications are sobering, both for human wellbeing and for development paths. At the policy level, the AU’s Agenda 2063 underlines the essential role of climate action for achieving Africa’s potential. However, because climate impacts are felt differently across regions and countries, disagreements between countries persist. While some countries have shown a willingness to contribute to mitigation efforts within their capabilities, adaptation remains the greater challenge, as funding for such initiatives has been less forthcoming. African leaders have therefore become strong advocates for predictable and adequate climate finance to support resilience building and the effective implementation of existing instruments and conventions. These needs were also strongly put forward by the African Group of Negotiators during COP24.

For many years, the EU has been a driving force behind the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and has adopted a strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy by 2050.<sup>36</sup> Several EU member states have also shown leadership in enacting sound domestic policies on emissions reduction. There is a continent-wide emissions reduction scheme, and legislation on renewables and energy. Climate diplomacy and climate resilience are also climbing on the European agenda.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, if the EU wants to maintain its leadership in climate action, it will need to do much more, as emissions in Europe are still too high.<sup>38</sup>

A positive sign is the European Commission’s proposal in its MFF package to increase the share of the EU budget

dedicated to climate-related initiatives. That would become 25% over 2021-2027. Yet, some are calling for higher targets, criticising the amounts currently proposed as insufficiently ambitious. Additional challenges beyond financing regard how the EU and member states can work more effectively at the country level to foster a political environment conducive to climate action. There is also growing demand for the EU to present a budget that is fully climate compatible and to disinvest from fossil fuels.

## Implementing the Paris Agreement will require a broader and deeper dialogue on climate change between Africa and the EU

Beyond multilateral cooperation and platforms for Europe and Africa, there is a growing movement for climate action among cities and civil society. 2019 will offer numerous opportunities for these local actors to make their voices heard. Two meetings in February – the ninth World Urban Forum (WUF) in Dubai and the C40 Mayors Summit in Copenhagen – will discuss environmental sustainability and resilient urban development, as well as climate solutions at the city level. In June, the tenth Global Forum on Urban Resilience and Adaptation will be held in Bonn, Germany, organised by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Implementing the Paris Agreement will require a broader and deeper dialogue on climate change between Africa and the EU to resolve three long-standing issues: providing predictable financing and funding modalities, striking a fair balance between support for adaptation and mitigation strategies, and equitable support for the poorest and most climate vulnerable countries. While the blending of public and private finance has contributed to an increase in private finance for climate action, the focus up to now has mainly been on emerging economies. Support has neglected climate adaptation in the poorest and most climate vulnerable countries, particularly in Africa.

## Peace and security

The most pressing peace and security themes in EU-Africa cooperation are linked to the ongoing institutional changes within the EU and AU discussed above. Particularly key in the case of the AU is the issue of subsidiarity. For the EU the main area is the ongoing discussions on the European Peace Facility (EPF).

### Subsidiarity and security

The division of labour between the AU and RECs and the outcome of the July 2019 AU-REC coordination meeting on subsidiarity will have significant ramifications for the

maintenance of peace and security on the African continent. The RECs and regional mechanisms are indispensable peace and security actors under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which is the ultimate continental peace and security coordination mechanism. But the exact meaning of subsidiarity and the exact terms of the AUs relation to the RECs on conflict prevention and management is yet to be articulated.

One current issue is the operationalisation and deployment of the African Standby Force (ASF). The ASF was set up as an AU conflict response mechanism whereby regional forces on standby could be readily deployed for humanitarian or security reasons, upon a decision by the AU. Only one of the five regional standby forces has been deployed up to now; that is, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) standby force in Lesotho in 2017. Notwithstanding, other ad hoc collective security arrangements have emerged to deal with regional transnational threats. These include the Multinational Joint Force to fight Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin and the joint force of the G5 Sahel to counter organised crime and armed groups in the Sahel region.<sup>39</sup>

The emergence of these assemblages raises questions about the role and mandate of the standby forces.<sup>40</sup> It also raises doubts about the value added and effectiveness of existing systems and mechanisms of the APSA in dealing with new conflict trends on the continent, which are characterised by asymmetric warfare involving non-state actors, and transnational threats not aligned to the boundaries of any one REC.

**The EPF would allow the EU to seek partnerships with AU member states or ad hoc “coalitions of the willing” directly, in order to promote its own interests, which risks undermining the authority of the AU.**

Implications of the European Peace Facility for the African Peace and Security Architecture  
Much remains unclear about the EPF and its implications for EU-Africa collaboration in peace and security. Its adoption without major changes would have two clear implications for Africa. First, the EU’s support to African peace and security efforts would be able to go beyond capacity building in support of security and development (CBSD). Thus in addition to training, infrastructure and equipment, the EU could provide direct, hard military assistance, including lethal equipment. Second, the EU would be able to directly support the military and defence capabilities of national armies of AU member states or ad hoc transnational military collaboration by African states, even when these are not mandated or led by the AU.

Currently, the EU can only channel funds for African peace and security with and through continental and regional APSA structures. This has led to frustration in the EU, as processes are perceived to be over-bureaucratic and delays have hampered urgent responses.

Whatever comes of the EPF proposal, its implications for the APSA need to be proactively addressed. One concern is the fact that the EPF would allow the EU to seek partnerships with AU member states or ad hoc ‘coalitions of the willing’ directly, in order to promote its own interests, which risks undermining the authority of the AU. Caution is particularly needed to ensure that the AU, and the APSA, on which a lot of energy and resources have been spent, do not lose their weight and value in mandating, facilitating and monitoring peace operations on the continent, if new channels open up for the EU to finance operations directly, and not always in line with the APSA framework.

Women, peace and security

October 2020 will mark the 20th anniversary of the UN’s landmark resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (WPS). 2019 thus offers an opportunity for a final push in implementing the resolution and to counter slow process on the ground, notwithstanding laudable efforts and some incremental advances.

Of late, the AU has reinvigorated its work on WPS. It adopted a continental results framework and has made a concerted effort to strengthen implementation and monitoring of the WPS agenda in Africa. A first report of progress towards the continental results framework is expected in 2019. Lessons learned from this exercise could be used to support the monitoring of regional action plans on the resolution adopted by RECs, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), SADC and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

The regional and national action plans currently in place confirm that the WPS agenda enjoys considerable visibility in Africa. Overall, 23 of the AU’s 55 member states (41%), have adopted national action plans towards resolution 1325. Among the UN member states, 74 countries (38%), have done so, meaning that the continent scores better than the world at large. In Europe, 17 of the 28 EU member states (almost 61%), have adopted national action plans for resolution 1325.<sup>41</sup>

Despite Africa’s strong record in adopting WPS policies and action plans, institutionalisation of the norms remains insufficient and the pace of implementation slows wherever financial backing and solid monitoring and review systems are lacking.<sup>42</sup> This has inhibited far-reaching progress in advancing the WPS agenda in Africa. Progress has been slow, for example, on the participation of women, women’s groups and female leaders in mediation processes. Efforts through FemWise-Africa, among others, have sought to respond to these gaps. Other initiatives have been geared towards ensuring due diligence and action against sexual exploitation and abuse in African peace operations. In this regard, the AU adopted policies on conduct and discipline

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for peace support operations (PSOs) and on prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse for PSOs.

The adoption and roll out of these policies by AU member states and the AU Commission will be complemented by other initiatives, such as the establishment of a misconduct tracking database and measures to screen and vet uniformed personnel to be deployed in AU peace support operations. These conduct and discipline-related policies, are taken as integral parts of ongoing efforts by the AU Commission to enhance compliance framework in line with the operationalisation of the AU Peace Fund, the UN Security Council's resolution 2320 (2016) and overall AU reforms.

## Migration

Migration looms large in EU-Africa relations. It was one of the more challenging topics at the 2017 AU-EU Abidjan Summit. Migration remains highly divisive both in Europe and in Africa. Countries on both continents have expressed fundamentally different approaches to the issue. The divergent approaches and decisions surrounding the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers within the EU's borders have led to increasing tensions across Europe. This dynamic is particularly evident in the southern EU states, which are disproportionately affected by migrant arrivals. They have at times denied entry to migrant-bearing ships. Several central and eastern European states have refused to join in the EU burden-sharing system.

### Migration remains highly divisive both in Europe and in Africa.

Despite these internal differences, EU states agree on the need to reduce the entry of irregular migrants, for example by strengthening and externalising the EU's borders. There is also consensus that decisions on legal entry should remain in the domain of the member states. As the issue of irregular migration has become more polarising, and with the rise of far-right parties, the EU has come to prioritise stricter border controls and swifter return of those migrants irregularly present in its territories.

EU migration policy towards Africa has centred largely on agreements with individual African countries. Nonetheless, the EU is directing increasing efforts towards the regional processes of Khartoum and Rabat and the Valletta Agreement, while pursuing a number of bilateral agreements, such as on return and readmission. A future overarching framework agreement with the ACP on migration is not likely to change this, but it would bring a risk of migration still being dealt with in a fragmented way in Africa.

The African narrative on migration is more focused on migration within Africa. As African leaders have reiterated in multiple fora, intra-regional and intra-continental migration far surpasses that to Europe.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, some see migration as a driver of economic growth and development. Nonetheless, several states still implement restrictive immigration policies and limit entry of foreign nationals. Nationalistic and xenophobic trends are also on the rise, with migrants facing frequent expulsions.

### Divergences in positions on migration within the two groups as well as between them have already been influential in defining the post-Cotonou negotiation mandates on migration and will likely influence the ACP-EU negotiation dynamics in 2019.

In light of the many global frameworks being negotiated – such as the UN global compacts on migration and on refugees and the successor to Cotonou – African partners are keen to ensure that Africa's narrative and priorities are adequately reflected, even if there are diverging interests and priorities among African countries.<sup>43</sup> The AU recently became more active on the topic of sustainable return, reintegration and development. In a bid to find durable solutions to forced displacement, the AU declared 2019 the 'Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa'. However, many African countries have yet to develop strategic policy frameworks on migration and development, and there are doubts about whether the AU's member states really do want their continental body to play a larger role on migration.

In terms of integration dynamics, the revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa<sup>45</sup> and establishment of the African Observatory for Migration and Development located in Rabat, have boosted the African agenda on migration. Additionally, several African countries are in the process of opening up their borders to other African nationals<sup>46</sup> as a first step towards facilitating the AfCFTA. More countries are set to follow through the Continental Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. While not all AU member states signed the two documents,<sup>47</sup> these new frameworks have the potential to alter Africa-EU migration patterns, particularly by encouraging more intra-African migration, including labour migration. Yet, this process of opening borders to African nationals may create tensions between the EU and AU in 2019 and beyond, as it clashes with European efforts to strengthen national borders in Africa to counter irregular migration flows.

Regional disembarkation platforms could potentially enable 'swift' processing of asylum claims outside EU borders. However, all North African countries have rejected the EU's

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proposal that they host such platforms, even in exchange for technical and financial assistance, as they are concerned about becoming a permanent buffer zone. While North African countries are not keen to host migrant reception centres or to readmit third country nationals, they do share a common interest with the EU in bolstering cooperation on border controls. North Africa is receiving increasing numbers of migrants, both regular and irregular, from sub-Saharan Africa. The challenges North Africa faces in migration management are similar to those confronting the EU. To this end, the countries in this region would likely welcome logistical and technical support in border management, though the terms of cooperation with the EU might differ from one country to the next.

Countries with more advanced cooperation with the EU on migration, like Tunisia and Morocco, would like a closer dialogue with the EU on visa facilitation for their own nationals, within the framework of the Mobility Partnership. Negotiations with Morocco and Tunisia on double visa facilitation and readmission agreements started a few years ago, but with little progress. The current environment in the EU is un conducive to such visa liberalisation agreements. These different interests between the EU and its southern neighbours make it difficult to arrive at a common agenda and shared objectives. Nonetheless, relations do seem to have improved slightly, thanks in part to the work launched at the Summit on the Emergency Libya Plan involving the AU, EU and UN.<sup>48</sup>

To advance the discussion between the EU and the southern Mediterranean states, an EU-League of Arab States Summit is planned for February 2019. Migration will be a high priority at that event.

## Development finance

Development finance has evolved rapidly in recent years, in volumes, sources and mechanisms. It remains a central topic in Africa-EU relations. Many African countries have long sought to break from the donor-recipient dynamic with the EU, towards an economic partnership with enhanced trade relations and increased public and private investment.

The 'Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs' announced by President Juncker is a step in that direction. It has the merit of bringing together relevant initiatives recently launched by the EU, though many of these are not new. Under the new alliance, 'jobs and growth compacts' are to support structural transformation and creation of up to 10 million decent jobs through stimulation of private sector investment and fostering a more conducive investment climate. The EU External Investment Plan (EIP), with its European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) and guarantee, is to be one of the main instruments for doing this. It is set to be enhanced under the next MFF, with the EFSD+ providing an open system of guarantees of up to €60 billion. The challenge will be to implement the EIP and EFSD+ objectives in real partnership with Africa, which has been kept on the sidelines of the EIP process so far. Another task

will be to harness EU investment for broader development cooperation efforts, and to do so while building on Africa's own dynamics, initiatives and institutions, including African public and private financial institutions.

## The challenge is to build on Africa's own dynamics, initiatives and institutions, including African public and private financial institutions.

To create jobs and spur investment, accompanying initiatives will be needed to stimulate skills development. Indeed, linking investment to relevant skills and education is crucial to promote inclusive and sustainable development. To maximise its potential, skills development should focus on the youth and women. Most of all, it must build on local dynamics and ownership. This stresses the primordial importance of the partnership dimension of the jobs and growth compacts proposed by the European Commission. Only with real partnership can these compacts become effective tools to support Africa's own development initiatives. The risk remains, however, of falling back into a donor-led approach, despite the positive partnership rhetoric of the new alliance. Finally, agricultural investment will need to be a central part of the alliance.

## Sustainable agriculture and agri-food business

Agriculture and the agri-food sector play a strategic role in the creation of decent jobs, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development in Africa. As the sector employs over 65% of the labour force and most farmers are smallholders, agricultural transformation can have a big impact in reducing poverty and food insecurity, while providing employment opportunities for Africa's rapidly growing population. While agriculture's output has increased since 2000, mainly due to expansion of cultivated areas, it still suffers from low productivity, weak rural infrastructure, uncompetitive and fragmented national and regional markets, limited farming investments, inconsistent policies and a skills deficit. Furthermore, agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as declining crop yields are an inevitable result of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods.

The fifth AU-EU Summit reiterated the need to boost responsible private sector investment in African agriculture as a way to address these challenges. The launch in Abidjan of the AU-EU Agribusiness Platform, for structured public-private dialogue on investments, aims to increase cooperation between agri-food businesses from Europe and those in Africa. For this it will be important to coordinate with other recently launched EU initiatives, such as the agriculture and agri-business window under the EIP, the Agriculture Financing Initiative (AgriFI) and the Sustainable



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Business for Africa platform (SB4A),<sup>50</sup> as well as with the AU's continental agribusiness strategy.<sup>51</sup>

The European Commission recently created the Task Force Rural Africa,<sup>52</sup> comprising experts from Europe and Africa, to help enhance the EU's role in African job-creating economic development in agriculture, agri-business and agro-industries. The task force has been asked for innovative ideas on policies and instruments to more effectively contribute to job creation, especially for the youth and women. Areas of particular interest include territorial approaches to agricultural transformation, the centrality of sustainable natural resources management and climate resilience, support for intra-African agricultural trade, and implementation of the EIP's agriculture investment window. In January 2019, the task force will present its recommendations. These are expected to form the core of the agri-food component of the new Africa-Europe Alliance.

Finally, the upcoming third EU-AU Agriculture Ministerial Conference, planned for June 2019, could provide an opportunity for deepening political commitment and envisioning concrete deliverables – on both policies and investment – for a renewed AU-EU cooperation on agriculture and rural development, possibly building on the task force's recommendations as well. ■



## Conclusion

**The 'Africa Rising' narrative has been floating for well over a decade. Yet, there has never been a more substantial effort towards continental integration in Africa as now.**

From restructuring the AU to make it a more efficient and coherent organisation, to ensuring sustainable self-financing, implementing continental programmes including peace and security, and boosting intra-continental trade through the AfCFTA, African countries are making visible efforts towards continental integration and elevating their representation and roles globally. Thematically, the AU has demonstrated a renewed commitment to gender equality and to equitable representation of women in its institutions and programmes.

Africa's appeal for more trade over aid, coupled with its partnership with rising powers, is challenging traditional partners such as the EU to break from their traditional aid-oriented approaches. However, old habits die hard. Neither the EU nor African states themselves are ready to abandon business as usual and start anew immediately. Continental and regional integration processes in Africa have put increasing pressure on the legacy of fragmented EU policy frameworks and relations. This has led the EU to search for a stronger political partnership with 'Africa as a whole'. However, what the EU is currently offering Africa remains fragmented and incomplete.

The EU is pursuing deeper relations with Africa, for example, through the 2016 EU Global Strategy and the joint declaration from the 2017 AU-EU Abidjan Summit. Most recently, it took concrete steps to establish what Juncker called "a partnership of equals" in his 2018 State of the Union. Considering the consistency with which the EU has expressed the foreign policy objective of deepening its political partnership with Africa, it appears rather incongruous that the EU has opted to stick to the ACP-EU format as the overarching framework for regulating future relations with Africa. From a foreign policy point of view the EU's interest is clear, namely, to regionalise its currently scattered relations with Africa, while keeping the structures of the ACP construct in place for some form of continuity.

This means that negotiation of a successor agreement to Cotonou will build on a common foundation agreement to be complemented by regional protocols for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. At the same time, the EU has reiterated its willingness to revitalise the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, though this agreement has remained a 'political declaration' without binding force.

The follow-up to the 2017 AU-EU Abidjan Summit and the run-up to the post-Cotonou negotiations have revealed major divisions in Africa as well. Thinking and acting continentally is still a bridge too far for many African states, as illustrated by their reluctance to give the AU a clear mandate to negotiate on their behalf in the post-Cotonou process. As a result, the ACP-EU framework is again the starting point and organising principle for the post-Cotonou arrangements, though this is in contradiction with today's geopolitical realities and regional dynamics.

This demonstrates that the AU is at a crossroads. Pan-African and regional institutions are clearly as strong as their member states allow them to be. It is not evident what role member states see for the AU when it comes to their representation in legally binding partnerships. This, however, does not diminish African states' commitment to continental integration. Granted, the integration process in Africa, just as in the EU, is not linear but a bumpy road with ups and downs. Major discussions are underway in Africa on AU institutional reform and financing, the AfCFTA and the deepening of partnerships with a growing group of global players such as China. These attest to the visible effort that the continent is putting into continental integration, now more than ever before. ■

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## NOTES

1. African Union Commission/Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2018), *Africa's Development Dynamics 2018: Growth, Jobs and Inequalities*
2. These include the 2016 EU Global Strategy, the 2017 European Consensus on Development, the revised EU Neighbourhood Policy, the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy.
3. European Commission (2018), *Towards a swift agreement on a long-term budget for Europe's priorities*, COM (2018) 814.
4. As stated by Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: "We propose a budget for the external action of the European Union of €123 billion for the next seven years: an increase of 30% that is an unprecedented investment in our global role. More resources for more action as a reliable, predictable, cooperative global player - exactly what our citizens and our partners expect in these troubled times. It is recognition of the added value of the EU work on foreign policy. Together we can have an impact that no Member State alone can have in today's world."
5. Three quarters of the NDICI would be channelled through the geographic pillar to support political cooperation with partner countries and regions. This amount will likely be complemented with additional funds from the other two pillars (thematic and rapid response) as well as from the emerging challenges and priorities cushion.
6. European Commission (2018), *Towards a More Efficient Financial Architecture for Investment Outside the European Union*, 12 September, COM(2018) 644 final. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-investment-outside-eu-communication-644\\_en\\_o.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-investment-outside-eu-communication-644_en_o.pdf)
7. Franco-German Meseberg Declaration: *Renewing Europe's Promises of Security and Prosperity*, 19 June 2018. [www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/germany/events/article/europe-franco-german-declaration-19-06-18](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/germany/events/article/europe-franco-german-declaration-19-06-18)
8. Based on the priorities identified by the EU Council at the 2016 and 2017 summits in Bratislava, Rome and Salzburg.
9. The African Peace Facility is the EU's main instrument to address peace and security issues in Africa. It is funded with resources from the EDF and supports both African-led peace support operations and capacity building and institutional development activities in the context of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).
10. The Athena mechanism finances some common costs relating to EU military operations.
11. European Commission (2018) *EU Budget for the Future: Defence*.
12. For an overview of relevant UK and EU positions, please consult 'The Brexit negotiations: Who thinks what'.
13. Kagame's first report on AU institutional reforms, "The Imperative to Strengthen the Union: Report on the Proposed Recommendations for the institutional Reform of the African Union" appeared in January 2017.
14. See also, Paratlhathle, K. and Vanheukelom, J. (2018), *Financing the African Union: On Mindsets and Money*. PEDRO/ECDFM
15. Regional Economic Communities are regional groupings of African states and are considered the building blocks of the Union and ultimately of continental integration.
16. A number of legal texts, frameworks, and mechanisms govern the AU-REC relationship, including the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, the AU Constitutive Act, and the Protocol on the Relations between AU and RECs.
17. Institute for Security Studies (2017), *AU Reforms: The Challenge of Clarifying the Roles of the AU and RECs*.
18. On challenges in applying the subsidiarity principle in violent conflicts in Africa, see Desmidt, S. and J. Vanheukelom (2018), *Regional Peace and Security Architectures in Africa: A Reality Check*. PEDRO/ECDFM
19. African Union (n.d.), *CFTA: Continental Free Trade Area*. <https://au.int/en/ti/cfta/about>
20. As of January 2019, seven AU member states have ratified the AfCFTA.
21. African Union (2018), *Decision on the African Continental Free Trade Area*, Assembly/AU/Dec. 692 (XXXI), 31st Ordinary Session 1-2 July.
22. European Commission (2018), *Communication on a New Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs: Taking Our Partnership for Investment and Jobs to the Next Level*. 12 September, COM(2018) 643 final.
23. Carlos Lopes (2018), *The Untapped Potential of EU- Africa Trade*. Project Syndicate, 22 October.
24. Medinilla, A. and J. Bossuyt (2018), *Charting the course to 2020: Fundamental choices for the negotiation of a future ACP-EU partnership*.
25. See Joint Communique between the European Union and the United Nations: *A renewed partnership in development*, [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/51272/joint-communique-between-european-union-and-united-nations-renewed-partnership-development\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/51272/joint-communique-between-european-union-and-united-nations-renewed-partnership-development_en)
26. See Joint Communiqué of the Third African Union-European Union-United Nations Trilateral Meeting, New York, 23 September 2018, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_STATEMENT-18-5882\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-5882_en.htm)
27. The July 2019 HLPF on sustainable development will focus on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality and on review of SDG 16 (peaceful, just and inclusive societies) and SDG 10 (reduce inequality), among other goals. In September 2019, the HLPF will be convened for the first time under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. At this quadrennial summit on the 2030 Agenda, heads of state and government will provide high-level political guidance on the agenda and its implementation, identify progress and emerging challenges, and mobilise further actions to accelerate implementation.
28. African Union (2017), *African Union Assembly/AU/Dec. 631 (XXVIII)*, 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, 30-31 January, Addis Ababa.
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30. *Make Every Woman Count (2016)*, African Women's Decade 2010-2020: Mid-Term Review.
31. World Bank (2018), *Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%)*, accessed October 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>
32. African Union Commission (2018). *11th Extraordinary Summit Summary of Key Decisions*. 18 November. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181118/11th-extraordinary-summit-summary-key-decisions>
33. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018), *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C*. [www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/](http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/)
34. International Institute for Sustainable Development (2018), *UN Secretary-General Looks Forward to 2019 Climate Summit to Mobilize Climate Action*, Finance. 2 October. <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-general-looks-forward-to-2019-climate-summit-to-mobilize-climate-action-finance/>
35. The South African (2018), *Climate Change: Eight African Cities Named in Top 10 "Extreme Risk" Zones*. 14 November. <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/climate-change-vulnerable-african-cities/>
36. European Commission (2018), *Communication on A Clean Planet for all: A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy*, COM(2018) 773 final
37. The European Parliament has emphasised the EU's responsibility to lead on climate action, with special attention for prevention of climate change-related conflict. See European Parliament (2018), *Report on Climate Diplomacy*, 26 June (2017/2272(INI)).
38. European Environment Agency (2018), *Air pollution still too high across Europe*, 29 October 2018, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/air-pollution-still-too-high>
39. The Multinational Joint Force is made up of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin. The G5 is made up of forces from Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, Chad and Mali. For more on these forces see ICG (2017), *Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force*. Report 258. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/burkina-faso/258-force-du-g5-sahel-trouver-sa-place-dans-lemboutillage-securitaire-et-sawadogo>, W. A. (2017), *Can the Joint Task Force Against Boko Haram Stay the Course?* 13 January. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/can-the-joint-task-force-against-boko-haram-stay-the-course>
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41. This figure includes the UK.
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47. In October 2018, Ethiopia announced that it would introduce visa-free entry for African travellers, while others (such as Morocco) restricted travels for some ECOWAS nationals.
48. At the time of writing, 49 AU member states had signed the AfCFTA, while only 32 had signed the Free Movement Protocol. In fact, all North African countries refrained from signing the Free Movement Protocol due to concerns about labour migration inflows. North African countries advocated a gradual process that would offer more time to analyse implications of the protocol.
49. The AU-EU-UN Task Force on Migration, launched at the Fifth AU-EU Summit in Abidjan, addresses the situation of stranded migrants in Libya. The task force has worked with concerned member states to scale up returns, in collaboration with the Libyan authorities and the international community.
50. EU-Africa Business Forum (2017), SB4A: Sustainable Business for Africa Platform. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/sustainable-business-for-africa\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/sustainable-business-for-africa_en.pdf)
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52. European Commission (2018), Commission Creates Task Force Rural Africa to Focus on Development Role of Food and Farming. 27 February. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/commission-creates-task-force-rural-africa-focus-development-role-food-and-farming-2018-feb-27\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/commission-creates-task-force-rural-africa-focus-development-role-food-and-farming-2018-feb-27_en)

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## Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific	EU	European Union
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area	HLPF	High-Level Political Forum (UN)
APF	African Peace Facility	HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism	JAES	Joint Africa-EU Strategy
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture	MEP	Member of European Parliament
ASF	African Standby Force	MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
AU	African Union	NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy	PSO	Peace Support Operation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	REC	Regional Economic Community
EDF	European Development Fund	SADC	Southern African Development Community
EEAS	European External Action Service	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development (also the related EFSD+)	UN	United Nations
EIP	External Investment Plan (EU)	WPS	Women, Peace and Security
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement		
EPF	European Peace Facility		

# KEY EVENTS IN 2019

