

CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

6 MARCH 2014 – BRUSSELS



“Public-private dialogue for a renewal of the economic partnership between Europe and West and Central Africa”

Prominent African and European figures lead the way

With the 4th EU-Africa Summit coming up on 2 and 3 April 2014, thirty prominent figures from Africa and Europe came to Brussels on 6 March to pledge their support for renewing the ties between the EU and Africa, in front of 130 conference delegates.

They stressed the need to radically change the relationship between Africa and Europe and to establish an equal dialogue involving both the public and private sectors and allowing for the active participation of European and African civil societies.

Against the backdrop of globalisation, Africa and Europe need to rethink and reinforce their partnership by increasing solidarity to promote peace, sustainable development, forward-looking governance structures and a universalism that leaves no-one by the wayside.

Europe has created a peaceful community with a plural identity, which could be a source of inspiration for all African countries alike. Africa, which is striving to achieve endogenous development and to reinvent democracy and unity in a context of diversity, could help Europe to regain control of its economic growth and to increase its global influence.

Given its exceptional demographic circumstances, Africa must step up investment, cooperation and the development of concrete projects in essential areas such as agriculture, energy and infrastructure in order to create the conditions needed for sustainable and inclusive growth and hence to meet the needs of its people.

Europe, which is losing market share in Africa, must adopt a more open outlook to keep pace with the changes taking place and to:

- *encourage the introduction of a joint industrial development strategy,*
- *revise its trade policy and adjust its economic partnership agreements (EPAs) to focus primarily on regional integration,*
- *develop cooperation in education, training and the financing of the economy.*

These key issues were debated on 6 March with respect to the challenges facing the agricultural and energy sectors. The speakers proposed to take them further by developing initiatives to increase human and productive solidarity in the mutual interest of African and European development.

- *As the leading investor in Africa in terms of asset ownership, **Europe bears considerable responsibility for the continent's productive development.** It must step up its FDI and help increase productive capacity and stimulate change at the local level. The creation of joint ventures in the agricultural sector for example, and the development of partnerships between European and African businesses with a view to winning foreign markets must be encouraged.*
- ***Imbalances in the trade flows that are so essential to both sides must be corrected. EPAs must focus on regional integration and allow for a differentiated approach that takes specific local requirements and circumstances into account.***

*The EPA between ECOWAS and the EU, the technical aspects of which were finalised in February 2014, addresses the questions raised by stakeholders; **civil societies and the business community in particular must be continuously involved in its enforcement.***

EPAs can be a lever for development, provided that African countries take measures and introduce policies to:

- *pursue a fiscal transition, harmonise rights and reinforce institutions,*
- *build well-structured local markets and encourage trade in order to create integrated regional economic areas within an African union and hence facilitate intra-continental trade. In the agricultural sector, the development of mechanisms for structuring regional trade channels and networks, the introduction of agricultural policies and the creation of a pan-African agri-food union were proposed to make the most of local resources.*

Europe's experience in regional integration should provide the foundations for a constructive dialogue.

- ***Africa has an impressive stock of human capital and must address education and training provision** to improve the employment prospects of young people in areas likely to stimulate growth.*

Given the flagrant shortage of skills and qualifications across all sectors and at all levels, governments must rethink their education strategy and companies must play a key role in training provision.

*The speakers pledged their support for a **close dialogue between educational establishments and the private sector** (encouraged to recruit locally) and for the **increased use of digital technologies** that transform teaching methods.*

Cooperation with the EU is needed to:

- *support the improvement of education and training systems and the distribution of new technologies, which require long-term financing,*
- *provide assistance with regard to methodology (statistics, identification of sectors, etc.), educational engineering and teacher training,*
- *build partnerships between European and African universities (knowledge transfer, course development, student and teacher exchanges, etc.),*
- *promote the development of a new generation of African entrepreneurs.*

- ***Private and public funds must be directed towards productive investment and infrastructure development.***

*The banking and financial landscape is changing with the development of African banks and regional stock markets, which indicates that Africans are regaining control of their economy. Nonetheless, **savings transformation mechanisms must be improved** to boost investment in the real economy.*

***Access to funds is still the biggest obstacle** to business development and to the creation of SMEs, the number of which is largely inadequate. Banks must encourage entrepreneurs by creating new financial products and reassessing their lending terms and conditions.*

***The energy sector could play a driving role in developing a financial industry and culture in Africa.** The financing of infrastructure requires the introduction of specific and innovative mechanisms to encourage long-term investment. **Banks and governments have an essential role to play:** the former*

by creating savings products dedicated specifically to investment in energy projects; the latter by developing the bonds market and creating guarantee instruments. The creation of public funds such as these is necessary to ensure that risks are shared – with the support of the European funds – and to encourage public and private investment.

Europe and Africa both need to find a way of financing their economies over the long term and must engage in a dialogue on the policies needed to promote such investment.

The Civil Society Conference was organised by Confrontations Europe and ASCPE-Les Entretiens européens in partnership with numerous stakeholders :

Ministère des Affaires étrangères, France – Commission Européenne – OIF Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie – CC UEA Bruxelles – CCI Burkina Faso – CIAN – FIAB – Afrique Inside – CADE – FARM – OFAD – 2iE - Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP – EDF – IGIP Afrique – Orange – Sodepal – Sedep – PAI Partners – I&P – BEI – BMS – IFC – IC Publications

The participants: **André-Franck Ahoyo**, Consultant, OHADA-IFC World Bank Group project; **Fabrice André**, Quality and CSR Officer for AMEA at Orange; **Erja Askola**, Trade Affairs Manager, DG for Trade, European Commission; **Bruno Barroux**, Director of the Infrastructure and Energy Department, SEDEP; **Anthony Bouthelier**, Deputy Chairman of CIAN; **Olivier Bousige**, Deputy Director of 2iE Technopole; **Pascal Canfin**, French Minister for Development; **Alessandro Carano**, Managerial Adviser and Head of Unit, Strategy Department, European Investment Bank; **Hervé Cronel**, Special Adviser, Office of the Secretary General of the Francophonie; **Jean-Christophe Debar**, Director of FARM; **Mamadou Daffé**, Director of Operations, and **Soufiana Diarra**, Commercial Director, Malian Solidarity Bank; **Fatou Diome**, writer; **Claude Fischer**, President of Confrontations Europe; **Erica Gerretsen-Phipps**, Deputy Head of Unit, DG EuropeAid, European Commission; **Philippe Herzog**, Founding President of Confrontations Europe, Special Adviser to Commissioner Michel Barnier; **Christine Heuraux**, Director of Training Support, Department of International Development, EDF; **Philippe Hugon**, Emeritus Professor, Université Paris-Ouest Nanterre La Défense; **Vanessa Jacquelin**, Economist, Saharan Africa Department, French Development Agency; **Jacques Nyemb**, Lawyer, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP; **Serguei Ouattara**, President of the EU-Africa Chamber of Commerce; **Roland Portella**, President of CADE; **Beseat Kiflé Sélassié**, poet and writer; **Jean-Michel Severino**, Chairman of I&P; **Olivier Stintzy**, Associate, Edifice Capital Group, Head of Infrastructure PPP Africa Fund; **Mathieu Tankoano**, Director at IGIP-Africa Burkina Faso; **Franck Tapsoba**, Managing Director of the Burkina Faso Chamber of Commerce and Industry; **Catherine Véglio-Boileau**, Senior Managing Editor, Confrontations Europe; **Lionel Zinsou**, CEO of PAI Partners; and **Simone Zoundi**, CEO of Sodepal and President of FIAB.