

Towards a new partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries after 2020

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Common global interests in a multi-polar world

1. To which degree has the partnership been effective in tackling global challenges?

2. What would be needed to strengthen results in this respect and on which global challenges could the partnership add most value in the future, in the context of the new SDGs framework and in relevant international fora?

Human rights, democracy and rule of law, as well as good governance

3. Have the mechanisms provided for in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) (i.e. political dialogue, financial support, appropriate measures, suspension of the agreement) achieved meaningful improvements on human rights, democracy, rule of law and good governance, including the fight against corruption? Should the future partnership do more in this regard, and in what way?

4. Has the involvement of local authorities and non-state actors (i.e. civil society organisations, the media), national parliaments, courts and national human rights institutions in the partnership been adequate and useful to promote human rights, democracy and rule of law as well as good governance? Could they contribute more and in what way?

The Cotonou Agreement considers the CSOs as service providers and partners for a dialogue. The role of the civil society is to cover the “last mile”, to provide basic services, to build the necessary link between the social infrastructure and the vulnerable people (also horizontal and not only vertical subsidiarity). In the latest multiannual programming it seems that the EU has emphasized the role of policy making, control and watch dog played by the CSOs. This may imply the risk of ignoring that the CSOs can contribute to these levels only by being present on the ground and by representing the communities’ voices. The non-state actors, mainly the CSOs, can give a major contribution if a balance between these two fields of action is preserved: CSOs which are born from the necessity to meet people’s needs, can contribute to policies and programmes and foster the institutional capacity building both on national and on local level. At the same time, thanks to the organic and constant link to their constituency, they can support citizens in demand for quality services and in building the ability to assess the adequacy of the services they receive , and thus contribute to good governance and rule of law. The attention to representativeness and constituency is crucial since the complexity of procedures often penalises field CSOs in favour of the branches of large international groups that have more instruments to access financing, but lack in relations, in capillarity and in presence on the ground (“the last mile”).

Peace and security, fight against terrorism and organised crime

5. Are the provisions on peace and security in the CPA appropriate and useful and has the balance between regional and ACP involvement been effective?

6. Should the future partnership provide for more effective joint action on conflict prevention, including early warning and mediation, peace-building and state-building activities, as well as on tackling transnational security challenges? Should this be done in the EU-ACP context?

Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, investment and trade

7. How effective has the partnership been in promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development?

8. Taking into account the new SDGs framework, should the future partnership do more in this respect, and what?

The renewal of the partnership is reasonable if based on the idea of mutual exchange. Globalisation introduces situations of vulnerability and crisis also in the European countries and, therefore, Europe could learn innovative solutions from the countries facing such difficulties for many years. However, it is important to abandon the top-down and/or donor-beneficiary approaches, and introduce a real dialogue based on the understanding that every population, every country and every community, even the most vulnerable, is a valuable resource. In short, the partnership should be based on reciprocity which, if not reduced to a merely economic aspect, could lead to a south-north cooperation.

9. How effective has the partnership been in supporting macroeconomic and financial stability? In which areas would there be added value in ACP-EU cooperation on macroeconomic and financial stability?

10. How effective has the partnership been in improving domestic revenue mobilisation, in promoting fair and efficient tax systems and in combatting illicit financial flows? Would there be added value and more efficiency in stronger ACP-EU cooperation on these matters?

11. Has the partnership been able to contribute substantially to mobilising the private sector and attracting foreign direct investment?

12. How could the potential of the EU and ACP private sector be better harnessed? What should be the main focus of EU and ACP private sector cooperation in a post-Cotonou framework, and what might be the role of ODA in this?

One of the main obstacles to the European investments in third countries, especially the PMI, is the difficulty in understanding the context, which often is time-consuming and may discourage investors. ODA should support this aspect by involving the CSOs in customized programmes, designed with each company by geographical area, business sector, etc. CSOs can serve as a link between local communities and business, helping enterprises to enter the context, promote productive initiatives already in place, organize the demand in an inclusive way that reaches the basis of the pyramid.

Based on its experience, AVSI is convinced that the real factor for success is the availability of human capital, rather than the mere technical aspects. This includes not only technical training but also, and above all, human and professional “training” that CSOs can provide thanks to their experience and knowledge of people and local communities. At the same time they may accompany the enterprises in identifying their own “convenience” in the investment, in terms of sustainability and competitive advantage.

13. In this setting, what opportunities do you see for the new, digital economy?

14. To what extent has the partnership been able to contribute to increase agricultural development and trade?

15. What has been the contribution of the partnership trade preferences to the integration of ACP countries in the world economy and to its development goals?

16. Is there still a need for specific provisions on trade cooperation in the post-Cotonou framework, also taking into account the ACP countries which have not signed an EPA? If so, what could/should they cover?

Human and social development

17. Has the partnership delivered on its human development objective in an effective and efficient way, in particular on poverty eradication, and also concerning gender equality and empowerment of women? How could it be improved?

Figures show that the human development goals were not reached as expected, even though some problems have been successfully diminished. Human development can be achieved only through the development of single persons who discover their own value and decide to commit to improving their lives and those of their communities and their countries. These are long processes that need guidance and support which are not favoured by short-term policies and project-based approaches, not even by channelling all aid through governments.

18. Taking into account the new SDGs framework, what are the main challenges related to human development that the future partnership should focus on?

The partnership should be concentrated around actions that can foster and support the birth and growth of the actual civil society organisations in partner countries. The notion of CSO should not be reduced to a mere nominalism as it may result in privileging entities that are formally CSOs but basically are offshoots of local or international groups that have no direct contact with grassroots organisations engaged on the ground.

Migration and mobility

19. Has the partnership been a useful vehicle for discussing migration issues and has it positively contributed? Has Article 13 CPA been fully applied?

20. Should a future partnership do more in this regard, and on which particular aspects should it focus (legal migration and mobility, addressing root causes of migration, return and readmission, tackling human trafficking and smuggling, international protection)?

A stronger political relationship

21. How effective has the political dialogue been and at which level is it the most effective: national, regional and through the joint EU-ACP institutions? Should the scope of political dialogue be widened or narrowed?

22. Would a stronger involvement of EU Member States, associating their bilateral policies and instruments to the political dialogue at national level, enhance the dialogue's effectiveness and efficiency?

Greater involvement of Member States could be useful as they could share their best practices to meet the needs of partner countries. However, this implies a common and solid European foreign policy.

23. Has the fact that the agreement is legally binding been instrumental to its implementation as compared to other regional partnerships based on political declarations?

Coherence of geographical scope

24. Could a future framework be usefully opened up to other countries than the current members of the ACP Group of States? Which countries would that be?

25. What kind of framework should govern EU and ACP relations? How could an ACP-EU successor framework relate to the more recent EU regional partnerships with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States? Could a future ACP-EU framework include distinct partnerships with regional partners?

26. Is there scope for building in more structured relationships with Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa?

Cooperation tailored more towards groups of countries with similar development level

27. Is the current system of allocation of development resources, based on need and capacities as well as performance, sufficient for channelling funds towards those countries where the highest impact can be obtained? Should allocation of resources continue to prioritise countries most in need, including fragile states?

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In any context, resources should be allocated to those with the best capabilities to achieve concrete results. This considered, it is a contradiction to assign resources to governments in fragile states involved in conflicts, and it is not sufficient to provide technical assistance to enable them to supply their citizens with quality basic services. In general, many governments would get more impact if the funding was submitted to a conditionality on the involvement of civil society at every level (programming, funds disbursement, evaluation).

28. What kind of cooperation could help to cover the specific needs of more developed ACP countries with a view to attaining more equitable and sustainable growth?

Strengthen the relationship with key actors

29. Has the current model of stakeholder engagement been conducive to attaining the objectives of the partnership in an efficient way? Which actors could play a more significant role in the implementation of the partnership? How could this be addressed?

Our feeling is that the partner countries tend to perceive this partnership as quite unilateral, the entities in charge of the implementation seem not enough aware of the increasing complexity of the situation to provide an effective contribution.

30. What could be done to promote effective and efficient involvement of both international and domestic private sector, civil society, social partners and local authorities in the partnership?

Recognize the specific role of each actor, promote their right of initiative, be open to the proactive approach of all stakeholders, identify forms of real partnership that are not limited to the consultation level.

31. Should the partnership be open to new actors as referred above?

32. In this regard, should the possibility of opening up the partnership to 'associated members' or 'observers' be considered?

33. How could a new framework promote triangular and South-South cooperation, including the increased involvement of ACP States as development actors in support of other ACP countries?

The partnership should be intended as a mutual exchange between the participants, therefore also between ACP countries of different regions and with different levels of development (see answer 8), without necessarily considering the EU as the unique reference model.

Streamline the institutional set-up and functioning of the partnership

34. Has the joint institutional set-up (with the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, the ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors, and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly) been effective in debating and promoting common views and interests and in providing political guidance and momentum to the EU-ACP partnership and the implementation of the CPA?

35. What is the added value of the joint ACP-EU institutions as compared to more recent regional and regional economic community frameworks for dialogue and cooperation?

36. What institutional arrangements would most effectively help address common challenges and promote joint interests?

37. Should a higher degree of self-financing of this functioning (ACP-EU Joint institutions and ACP secretariat) by the ACP States be required?

Better adapted and more flexible development cooperation tools and methods

38. Is there added value in having a dedicated financing instrument in support of the ACP-EU partnership? If so, what are the reasons and how would it differ from other external financing instruments funded by the general budget of the Union? Is this instrument flexible enough, especially to address crisis situations? Can this instrument be deployed differently?

The EDF is especially used for the budget support and the sector support. The budget support gives aid almost exclusively to the governments, without taking into account the local reality (in some African countries the private social sector provides the 50% of the services in education and healthcare), creating a distortion and disruption of basic social services. This happens because the state structures are “intoxicated” by this kind of funds and by the absence of real competition and cooperation.

The involvement of civil society during the planning stage and in the implementation of basic services is key to make this instrument more efficient. It is also necessary to introduce a positive conditionality based on the actual performances of which local communities have benefited and on the assessment of the involvement of civil society. In order to have real results, the selection process should be centred on the subject, refining the eligibility criteria on the experience, identity, performance, reliability and specific know-how. For example, the Result Based Approach should be used to evaluate new proposals. In general, preference should be given to projects which involve European NGOs with considerable experience. In this way, their expertise from decades of implementation of EU-funded projects and their know-how could be used also to further enhance past investments.

39. What is the added value of the EDF's co-management system involving national authorities in the programming and management of aid programmes, as compared to other EU cooperation instruments in non-ACP countries?

40. Does the current set-up of the programming process and implementation of activities lead to real ownership by the beneficiaries? What could be improved? How can the EU and Member States maximise the impact of joint programming?

The partnership can work if the EU, instead of exporting its models and procedures, establishes a real dialogue involving stakeholders, not only the representatives of a single area, or even “professionalised” representation bodies.

41. Does the variety of existing tools adequately support the EU and ACP common principles and interests and are there gaps that should be addressed? How do you assess the effectiveness and efficiency of various implementation modalities?

42. Should a higher degree of self-financing from the ACP States be required for activities to ensure ownership? Would this apply to all countries? On which principles should this be based?

The requirement of a higher degree of self-financing may be a double-edged sword. In fact, it might be particularly risky where lack an appropriate level of programming, because it might lead to invest in actions that are not functional for the development of the country, driven by external pressures. The right principle for a higher degree of self-financing should be the ownership, which cannot be limited to the governments, and a real joint programming.

43. How can the expertise of the EU and its Member States be better mobilised, particularly in the middle-income countries?

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