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?

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 SGDs framework, should the future partnership do more in this respect, and what?

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?

The EU's policy of offering duty-free and quota-free access to its sugar market has encouraged direct investment from EU sugar producers, particularly in Africa. CEFS is convinced that it is in large part thanks to the EU's preference regime that Africa is the only continent where the rate of sugar capacity build-out has been accelerating in recent years (F.O. Licht's International Sugar and Sweetener Report). Africa in particular is a naturally attractive destination for those looking to invest in sugar production - countries like Malawi, Ethiopia and Senegal are able to produce 118 tonnes of cane per hectare of land. However, CEFS feels strongly that any erosion of the preferences offered to the ACP and LDC countries will reduce the incentive to invest.

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?

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?

CEFS considers the granting of duty-free quota-free access to the EU's sugar market as an important stimulus to trade with the ACP and LDC countries and to their agricultural development. The EU is the major export destination for a number of ACP countries, among them Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Zambia. The removal of EU duties has increased revenues for operators in all sugar-producing ACP countries, giving them the opportunity to embark on ambitious expansion projects to boost both production and efficiency. The EU's policy has also encouraged significant direct investment from EU sugar producers, particularly in Africa.

However, CEFS is concerned that the preferences made available to the ACP countries are at risk of being undermined by possible changes to the current agreed trading structure and by the EU's broader trade policies. Opening up the EU market to sugar imports from third countries in the context of free trade negotiations exerts downward pressure on prices in the EU, reducing margins for ACP exporters. Many important sugar producing countries, e.g. Brazil, India, Thailand and Mexico, subsidise their sugar production, meaning that operators there are able to produce and sell sugar at below the cost of production. ACP operators cannot compete with such producers, and should not be expected to - CEFS feels strongly that competition on a skewed playing field is no competition at all.

The value of the trade preferences for ACP and LDC countries is upheld by the existence of the CXL duty applied to EU sugar imports from MFN countries like Brazil and Australia. Under the current WTO agreement, these CXL suppliers enjoy ‘semi-preferential’ access, defined by the relatively low CXL duty rate of €98/tonne. Maintenance of this CXL duty rate is vital to preserve the agreed ACP /LDC trade preference. Any suggestion of suspending it would undermine EU sugar imports from these developing countries, which would be very damaging for their fragile economies.

CEFS reminds the Commission that ACP producers will come under significant pressure with the removal of sugar quotas in 2017, which will see imports fall (shown in the European Commission’s ten year forecasts to 2015) as EU prices fall. LMC International has predicted that the total revenue loss from the dismantling of quotas could be as much as €850 million for the five-year period beginning 30 September 2017. CEFS therefore urges the Commission to fulfil its commitment to Policy Coherence for Development by limiting the opening of the EU’s sugar market to third countries.

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?

The preferences offered by the EU to the ACP/LDC countries are uniquely far-reaching. Duty-free quota-free access to ACP/LDC sugar means that it can be imported cheaply and easily into the EU, for use in sugar products or in industrial applications. The ACP/LDC preferences therefore strengthen the integration of these countries into the value chains of the EU.

The income generated by sugar sales to the EU is being re-invested into the sector, for example in co-generation facilities and ethanol production. This aspect is crucial for Africa's development in particular: building energy capacity has been recognised as a development priority for the continent by the UN and by the Africans themselves.

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?

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

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?

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?

From CEFS' perspective, access to the EU's sugar market ought to be reserved for those countries most in need, in order to prevent preference erosion and lessen the downward pressure on EU sugar prices outlined above. Unlike other development activities, the preferences granted to the ACP countries on sugar require neither a channelling of funds nor an allocation of resources. Their positive impact, however, is recognised by the ACPs themselves as major.

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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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