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## **The EU's interest in Africa**

When African and European leaders meet in Tripoli later this month the EU's partnership with Africa will be at stake. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa-EU Summit will focus on investment, economic growth and employment creation. Ahead of this high-level meeting, the European Commission published a communication titled: "Africa-Europe 2020: 1.5 billion people, 80 countries, 2 continents, one future – Commission Communication on the consolidation of EU-Africa Relations".

Although it is stated that the Joint Africa-EU Strategy moves beyond the donor-recipient model and aims at an inclusive approach by presenting the European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) as equal partners, Development NGOs have repeatedly expressed concerns about this relationship.

"The Commission is presenting the Joint Africa-EU Strategy as a truly equal partnership, yet we have to remember that the origin was the EU's Strategy for Africa" commented Simon Stocker, Director of Eurostep. "It is clear from the Communication that a driving force in this relationship is the EU's own interests, set out in its 2020 Strategy. This is more about its own economic role in the world than development in Africa."

According to Olive Towey, Chair of Eurostep "there is value in supporting this political partnership. However there are numerous shortcomings to be addressed".

There has been growing concern that the involvement and consultation with African civil society in the policy shaping of the strategy has been undermined, causing an imbalance between European and African civil society involvement. Moreover, the positioning towards the Tripoli Summit does not sufficiently address the divergent views on significant aspects of the partnerships. "The communication hints at the capacity of the strategy to address global issues and public goods but does not consider the divergent agendas on climate change, an issue that is critical to the future of the partnership" said Stocker.

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Thus, the European and African leaders should ultimately address sensitive issues and confront the differences in certain policy areas, such as climate change. “If they fail to address those issues, the political relevance of the Jaes and the credibility of the EU and AU may be significantly undermined” Stocker concluded.

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### **Background:**

1. The first Joint Africa-EU Strategy was adopted at the EU-Africa Lisbon Summit in 2007, which outlines the long-term policy orientations between the two continents. The third Africa-EU Summit will be held in Tripoli, Libya on the 29 and 30 November 2010. During the summit, the second Joint-Africa EU Strategy will be adopted, reaffirming and confirming the commitments of the first strategy, adopted in 2007. The central theme of the summit will be: “Investment, economic growth and employment creation”.
2. The first action plan (2008-10) consists of 8 thematic partnerships: Peace and Security; Democratic Governance und Human Rights; Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure; Millennium Development Goals; Energy; Climate Change; Migration, Mobility and Employment as well as Science, Information Society and Space.
3. The draft of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES)’s Action Plan 2011-2013 for the 8 Partnerships has been laid out in the report of the 11th meeting of the Joint AUC-EC Task Force (JTF). The different draft action plans (2010-2013) can be found at: <http://europafrica.net/2010/11/08/jaes-draft-action-plan-2011-2013/>
4. The full text of the EC communication: “Africa-Europe 2020: 1.5 billion people, 80 countries, 2 continents, one future – Commission Communication on the consolidation of EU-Africa Relations” can be found at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/COMM\\_COM\\_2010\\_634\\_RELATIONS\\_UE\\_AFRIQUE\\_EN.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/COMM_COM_2010_634_RELATIONS_UE_AFRIQUE_EN.pdf)