

## **For a comprehensive strategy for the negotiation of a Post-Cotonou cooperation agreement**

### **New prospects in Europe / Africa relations:**

*Discussion Paper  
proposed by United Cities and Local Government of Africa  
UCLG Africa*

### **The changing international environment**

1. Since the 2000s, during which the Cotonou Agreement was concluded, the world has undergone major upheavals of both Europe and the ACP countries, as well as of the international community as a whole. These changes lead to a reassessment of the situation of each party and of the new challenges which these two groupings are facing.

#### *At the level of Europe*

2. The situation is particularly difficult in Europe, which has seen the transformation of the 2008 financial crisis into a systemic crisis, accompanied since that time by an explosion of inequalities compounded by ongoing austerity policies. One is witnessing in several Member States the questioning of the beneficial virtues of the global economy, the temptation to close its borders or even that of exiting from the Union, as is visible in the UK or even in the Netherlands. This trend is accompanied by the rise of populism, anti-migration movements, and security problems. This situation is further exacerbated by the impact of global warming that obliges all regions of the world to limit their emissions of greenhouse gases and to promote energy and ecological transition, failing which the world would face the adverse consequences of climate change that would compromise the quality and living environment of most Europeans.

3. Year 2016 is particularly crucial for Europe since at the end of June 2016, the European Union must adopt its overall strategy and redefine its vision of the future, beyond the issues of defense and security, and include also development. This vision must include the Agenda of Sustainable Development and its implementation by 2030 adopted by the international community in September 2015, as well as the Climate Agenda adopted at COP21 in Paris in December 2015 and signed by most UN member states in April 2016 in New York. 2016 is also the year in which the European Union must finalize its negotiating mandate for the future cooperation agreement that should be the successor to the Cotonou Agreement in 2020.

4. The context is also that of a Europe that needs to reconsider its role in global governance in the face of the challenges the world is facing and in the face of the new global challenges. This reconsideration should acknowledge the difficulties of some cooperation mechanisms in place that have not produced the desired results : the difficulties of the Neighborhood Policy in the South and in the East ; the clear unsuitability of the mainly security type of answers and isolationism in the face of the migratory crisis and terrorism ; and the clearly obsolete character of the ACP cooperation framework in the face of the changes caused by the effects of globalization on the geo-strategic differentiation of the elements constituting the ACP grouping.

5. In this year of 2016, Europe is at a crossroads : (a) *either* it will be content with acting in the sidelines by focusing primarily on issues of security and defense, and defines for this purpose a bare minimum political cooperation, thus confirming its inability to overcome the increasingly apparent pronounced division within the Union : the toughest choices would then be left to the Member States and the European Union would then lose the ability to influence and act which we would be entitled to expect from the most developed regional grouping in the world ; (b) *or* the EU decides to fully assume its role and make its voice heard on all issues and challenges that Mankind is facing today and tomorrow: the Union should then make policy choices meeting its ambitions and its values, which would inevitably bring the Union to dare recognize the limitations of its current foreign policy, the need to change paradigm, and the need to link within the same vision, its security, its defense and its prosperity with that of other parts of the world, starting with those that are the closest to it, including Africa.

#### ***At the level of the ACP countries***

6. At the level of ACP countries, the context that used to prevail in 2000 at the signing of the Cotonou Agreement has changed a lot. Cotonou had already represented a major break from the philosophy that prevailed at the signing of the Yaoundé and Lomé agreements. Those agreements were indeed based on an asserted solidarity between the EU and ACP countries, the EU opening its market to the commodities of ACP countries and setting up a guarantee mechanism for the prices of those commodities (STABEX and SYSMIN), and ACP countries providing the natural outlet for industrial products and services offered by member countries of the European Union, with the guarantee of a purchasing power supported by the stabilization of prices of minerals and agricultural raw materials. With the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995, the logic of the price protection system for producers that was behind the solidarity between EU and ACP countries in a context of relatively closed economies, was replaced by the logic of integration of ACP countries within a globalized market whose proclaimed goal is to break down barriers to international trade that is being seen as one of the surest ways to ensure the

distribution of wealth, the fight against poverty and the protection of a peaceful environment among nations. The Cotonou agreements were signed with a view to preparing the ACP countries to gradually be integrated within the world market, and with a view to joining in a lasting manner the camp of political democracy, hence the importance that the said agreements have given to political dialogue and to the different players of national life in the definition, implementation and evaluation of cooperation activities. The 2020 timeline was set as the end of the preferences system and as the deadline for the entry of ACP countries into the ordinary law of WTO. The difficulties facing during the signing of the WTO agreements push an increasing number of countries, including the European Union, to negotiate bilateral agreements outside the multilateralism of WTO. One should therefore consider that from this point of view, the EU / ACP cooperation is nearing the end of an era.

7. The different components of the ACP countries experienced a variety of fortunes since their integration within the global economy. The strength that was represented by the 79 ACP member states into a world of national economies exerting a relative control over their borders is gradually dissolved in the dynamics of globalization, and the general trend has been to differentiation and not to the convergence between the European Union and the ACP countries, and between ACP countries themselves. In order to lower the constraints that globalization poses to each one of them individually, most ACP countries have felt the need to be closer to their neighbors and to be integrated into regional groupings that are better able ensure collective security along with sustainable development. The fact is, for example, that African countries have created in 2002, a policy grouping, the African Union, based on the structure of the European Union, with the aim to defend the interest of the continent in a world where regional groupings now appear as the relevant framework for international negotiations. One observes this movement in favor of integration into regional groupings also in the Caribbean and to a lesser extent in the Pacific.

8. The dynamics of globalization and the resulting free trade logic have led the European Union itself to develop, beyond the Cotonou Agreement, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with different ACP Member States and / or their regional groupings, putting *de facto* an end to the uniqueness and to the consistency of treatment of the ACP grouping.

9. The question therefore arises of the relevance of cooperation with the ACP group as envisaged in a world that is relatively different, or if one wants to be more positive, what would be the basis for cooperation with the ACP group whose components would be increasingly less homogenous, increasingly more specific, and characterized by strong centrifugal tendencies?

***At the international level***

10. The international context has itself evolved. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the resulting dismantling of the Soviet Empire had left some hope for a world unified around the values of representative democracy and market liberalism. This hope was symbolized by promoting a new universal consciousness manifested by the holding in September 2000 of the Millennium Summit, in which the 189 UN Member States adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) whose stated purpose was to end poverty in the world, starting by halving by 2015 its impact on the main components of society. The results were very uneven. The situation has even worsened since today, between two and three billion people live on almost nothing, and according to a recent study by Oxfam, 62 individuals worldwide have a fortune equivalent that the one owned by half of the world population. This tends to put in question the hope in a bright future for all, and to raise a strong sense of frustration and resentment among the losers of globalization, which exacerbates isolationism or even national rivalries within all regional groupings.

11. Awareness of the risks linked to climate change has placed again on the agenda the sense of belonging of all countries to the same planet and the need for a shared commitment to save the planet. This new momentum enabled the formulation, in September 2015, of Agenda 2030 and of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and during COP21 in Paris in December 2015, the formulation of the Climate Agenda, involving all the UN Member States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius ; and to adopt low-carbon production and consumption patterns and to take adequate measures to cope with and to adapt to disasters related to the impacts of climate change .

12. Awareness is increasingly emerging concerning the limits of the current growth model and its devastating impact in terms of extension of social inequalities and depletion of the planet's resources. This awareness brings the need to rethink the development model in both North and South, and to place it in an ecological transition perspective.

13. The international community is therefore urged to adopt a new development paradigm that requires a lesser pressure on natural assets, and one that is more inclusive and fair from the social standpoint, more equitable and more politically responsible. It is actually the reorganization of global governance that is in question, and the European Union and the ACP countries must reassess their relations in the light of this unique environment.

### **In search of a new development and cooperation paradigm: the unifying role of SDGs and of Agenda 2030**

14. As indicated above, the 2015/2016 period has been rich in terms of UN conferences on global issues: World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

(WCDRR) in Sendai (Japan), in March 2015 ; Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015 ; Conference on Sustainable Development Goals in New York in September 2015 ; Conference of the Parties on Climate Change in Paris in December 2015 ; and the Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development planned to take place in Quito in October 2016. All these conferences concur to the definition of Agenda 2030 urging the international community to achieve sustainable development goals of universal scope in order to face up to the challenges and issues of the world of today and tomorrow, including the climate challenge, the demographic challenge, the challenge of justice for all and access to all human rights, the challenge of security, and the challenge of peace and harmony between nations and peoples.

15. The implementation of Agenda 2030 requires that for the next 15 years, the international community should be able to translate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into action beyond mere declarations of intent. The implementation must also find new modes of partnership and cooperation to make of SDGs the engine of a systemic change towards a new model of economic, social, ecological and political development that promotes the transition to a more sustainable and inclusive development, both in the North and in the South. To do this, the international community must learn the lessons of the unsatisfactory implementation of the MDGs, namely a) avoid the " bureaucratic " treatment, management and monitoring of the SDGs, manifested by the temptation to hide behind a set of indicators that will mobilize the attention of experts, while the concrete implementation in the field will primarily depend on a strong political and financial commitment ; b) as a corollary, promote the localization of SDGs, that is to say their achievement above all at the local level, by recognizing the important role played politics and local authorities in this regard; c) ensure the coherence and alignment of all development, partnership and cooperation policies with SDGs (agriculture, energy, trade, investment, migration, ...).

16. In view of the foregoing, it is clear that the next global strategy of the European Union will have to make of the achievement of the SDGs and of Agenda 2030 a key feature of the relationship between Europe and its partners, and result into a genuine political will for change and transition to a new development and cooperation model. This comprehensive strategy must first be tested in the relations between the EU and Africa, when in 2018 negotiations on the new post-Cotonou cooperation agreement will start, and when the two regions are facing problems terrorism and issues of migration that represent concerns having an immediate impact on the security and peace for the two groupings.

**The need for a comprehensive and political partnership between the European Union and Africa**

17. Africa and Europe are more than ever dependent on each other: the fight against terrorism, the management of security, the management of migration flows, but also the transition towards sustainable development, required a strong political partnership between the two groupings, and the search for medium and long-term solutions to meet the common interests of both sides, beyond the security-only and borders-closing considerations that seem to be the current option in Europe. There will be no development in Africa if the continent is not peace; and there will be no peace and security in Europe without a perspective of peace and sustainable development in Africa. In other words, Europe and Africa must through their partnership contribute to the emergence of one of the major groupings whose voice should be able to have a strategic impact in the face of the global imbalance and weigh on global governance guidelines. The European Union must therefore make of the partnership with Africa an essential and innovative dimension of its overall strategy, as the European External Action Service (EEAS) has expressed the intention therefore.

18. Cooperation between the EU and Africa displays however some weaknesses that undermine its effectiveness and undermine a genuine political dialogue on all issues that govern relations between the two regions. Since 2004, African leaders continue to demand, so far unsuccessfully, that the EU deals with Africa as one and undivided continent («Treat Africa as one "). The lack of consistency in the cooperation policies and objectives between the European Union and the lack of strategic articulation between the different funding devices earmarked for Africa under the various instruments (NEP, EDF, CDI, Trust Fund) that divide Africa into many portions, do weaken the efficiency of cooperation with Africa and result in the fact the joint Europe/Africa strategy (JAES) is affected by a structural weakness, since it is not based on any legal and financial base worthy of the name. It is hardly surprising that JAES suffers from a problem of ownership by the parties and has struggled to present tangible results. For many people, JAES is ultimately paramount to an essentially bureaucratic exercise that is almost at a standstill today, for lack of a genuine political dialogue between Europe and Africa. Such a dialogue cannot be organized without the recognition by the EU of all pan-African governance institutions, starting with the African Union. To date, except for the annual “Commission to Commission” meeting, the only real existing framework of dialogue with European Union and the African Union is the one on peace and security developed around the Peace Facility, an innovative instrument set up in 2004 on intra-ACP EDF financing (actually inappropriate since the Peace Facility accounts for the countries of the Mediterranean coast of Africa that are under the purview of the neighborhood instrument). The Peace Facility, set up almost by force, appears today to be one of the rare “success stories” of partnership between the European Union and the African Union. But the limitations of this instrument are increasingly obvious and such a tool should be rethought in the context of a new political partnership covering

all African countries. The same applies for the Trust Fund <sup>1</sup> for migration, an *ad hoc* instrument proposed by the European Union in response to the migration crisis that must also be the subject of adjustments so as to be better integrated into the overall political strategy.

19. Rethinking the political dialogue with Africa also means taking into account one of the remarkable advances made by the Cotonou Agreement that consisted in not limiting political dialogue to a face-to-face encounter between the European Union and national governments, but rather in promoting inclusive political dialogue involving the local authorities, the civil society players, as well as those of the private sector. The partnership that was expanded to all stakeholders aimed at promoting ownership of the development process and at improving the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation, particularly with regard to the goal of fighting poverty (a major goal of the new cooperation agreement).

20. It was only with the publication of the 2013 Communication that the European Commission finally recognized local authorities as full-fledged state actors with separate responsibilities from those of the national State and of the civil society and their crucial role in the governance of public affairs and in territorial development. Thanks to their interventions on the ground and their advocacy activities, local authorities are now eligible to the budget line which was until recently reserved for civil society organizations, and has become the budget item entitled “Non State Actors and Local Authorities (NSA / LA)”. The recognition of local authorities also encouraged the conclusion in the context of the NSA / LA budget line of a strategic partnership between the European Commission and five international and regional associations of local authorities for the structuring and capacity building for national associations of local authorities. The new strategic guidance still remains to be implemented in all cooperation policies and programs in order to enable local authorities to participate in the implementation of the Communication provisions, to policy dialogue on European cooperation, and to the definition, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of cooperation programs supported by the European Commission.

21. Finally we have the vague feeling that as time passes and as the many restructuring proceedings of the European Commission bodies in charge of development take place, officials have somewhat lost sight of the fundamental goal of integration of new players in the partnership, and focused their efforts on the sophistication of procedures that proved not fit for the purpose of strengthening and leading to the emergence of new cooperation actors, including local authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> See UCLG-A statement for the Valletta Summit on Migration.

22. In total, the indispensable condition for the implementation of an effective and efficient political partnership between the European Union and Africa is the recognition of the uniqueness of Africa, as well as the inclusion in this dialogue of the political institutions in charge of the governance of this continent that are articulated mainly around the African Union and the institutions in charge of regional integration (RECs). This premise immediately raises the question of integration of the countries of the Mediterranean coast of Africa in any partnership between Africa and the European Union. Europe must understand that it may not find real and sustainable solutions to the issues of migration<sup>2</sup>, terrorism, climate change, and transition to sustainable development (including the attainment of SDGs), without involving in a comprehensive and structured dialogue around legitimate institutions in Africa all African countries (North and South of the Sahara): this is the prerequisite for the overhaul of the Neighborhood Policy desired by Europe with the countries of the South. The other condition that the political partnership must meet consists in including all relevant players in any political dialogue with a view to defining, implementing and assessing progress in achieving the SDGs, starting with local authorities that are the authorities that are the closest to the population, if one wishes that the partnership between the African Union and Africa to have tangible impacts on the ground.

### **New international geopolitical context and post-Cotonou cooperation framework**

23. Cooperation between the EU and ACP countries occupies the minds of both parties at this time when the question of the future of such cooperation is posed since the Cotonou Agreement will expire in 2020. The interrogation period concerning the post-Cotonou cooperation must be utilized to assess to which extent it is appropriate to renew such an agreement in view of the changes occurred in the international environment and within each of the two parties to the partnership.

24. There is an increasingly asserted recognition that Nation-States seem to be too small as a framework to deal with global problems and too large to address concrete problems. This awareness leads Nation-States on the one hand to come together in regional groupings on the basis of geographical proximity and the community of destinies to redefine and redraw the contours of international relations in a world that is increasingly interdependent ; and secondly, to decentralize and to place their actions within a territorial perspective, increasingly seeking the contribution of local authorities and other stakeholders in the definition and implementation of global agendas to ensure their real impact on the population. This awareness also led the international community to grant more attention to the territorial impacts of the

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<sup>2</sup> Politically involving countries of origin and countries of transit.

dynamics of urbanization and to admit that the implementation of Agenda 2030 must be based on the localization of SDGs in territories within each country.

25. In relation to this new international environment, it is not surprising to see a divergence of destinies that is increasingly more pronounced between the three components of the ACP group. The diversity of regional issues and the differential immersion of each ACP component into a globalized world no longer make it possible to gather ACP countries around a "transformative" agenda based on a common vision and political project.

26. For example, Africa has formed a structured and organized geopolitical entity outside the ACP logic, with the ambition of playing an increasingly autonomous role in global debates, as this was confirmed with the adoption of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the ongoing development of the action plan for its implementation. Africa has also developed in recent years several political partnerships with regions and countries that count in terms of global political and economic relations. The regular organization of high-level meetings between leaders of Africa and other countries and regions of the world<sup>3</sup> shows to which extent for the African leadership, the ACP framework becomes less and less relevant as an influential force in world affairs. At most, African leaders consider that the Cotonou Agreement may have presented some interest as a long-term instrument of financial and technical cooperation between the European Union and the ACP countries, endowed with financial means that are contractually guaranteed. Nonetheless, given the current economic and financial circumstances within the European Union, it is not certain whether the post-Cotonou agreement could ensure the continuation of such a long-term instrument of financing and technical assistance.

27. Furthermore, during their Conference held in June 2004 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, the Heads of State and Government of member countries of the African Union adopted the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development, thus affirming their political will to give more importance to local authorities in the implementation of development and cooperation policies and strategies in Africa. During the same conference, the Heads of State and Government of member countries also adopted the principle of the creation of a High Council of Local Authorities as an advisory body of the African Union. From this point of view, Africa has anticipated the guidelines of the international community which now stress the need to "territorialize" SDGs and to grant a greater role to local authorities in their implementation so as to ensure their greater impact on the ground. The territorial development approach is increasingly innovative in that it

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<sup>3</sup> Chine/Africa summits ; Japan/Africa summits ; India/Africa summits ; Africa / Latin America summits ; Turkey /Africa summits ; USA/Africa summit ; Europe/Africa summits ...

provides momentum in favor of ecological, social and political transition that is the only way to ensure the resilience of territories and populations that inhabit them. The articulation and interaction between levels of governance, from the local level to the regional/continental level, represents a major strategic focus for the implementation of the African development policies.

28. Actually, for lack of a capable partnership likely to rely on legitimate political bodies<sup>4</sup>, the ACP cooperation framework focused primarily on the financial and technical management of the partnership, and is increasingly paralyzed by cumbersome procedures that became an end in themselves. This framework does not affect EU policies so as to make them consistent<sup>5</sup>, and has not promoted greater convergence between the EU and ACP countries. The most striking example is the question of terrorism and migration, that are not covered by the ACP framework and are the subject of ad hoc action plans that are not very much efficient because they are inadequately integrated in a political framework. On the other hand, in international negotiations on global issues, the ACP group is no longer able to influence decisions or even to present a common position. In reality, common positions are usually harbored by regional bodies, and in the case of Africa, the common positions of African countries are defended in international fora by the African Union after a regional consultation process within the RECs.

### **The regional approach, only credible prospect for a political and legitimate post-Cotonou political partnership**

29. The European Union has everything to gain to replace the partnership with the ACP group of countries whose representation is increasingly in question, by a partnership with each of the components that constitute this group, namely, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Several reasons were mentioned to explain this : The changing global geopolitical environment with the development of a multipolar world organized around regional groupings (as groupings of countries according to their home continent) ; the diverging interests and perspectives of each of the ACP components in the way they are positioned within the space of the globalized economy; the emergence of supranational institutions representing and defending the interest of regional groupings in international negotiations ; the shared sense of belonging to all of the same planet that must be preserved ; and other reasons. The EU should therefore give precedence in the new post-Cotonou agreement to the partnership with the Africa region, especially as this region has set for itself, as has

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<sup>4</sup> The joint ACP / EU bodies created an ad hoc basis can play this role, and increasingly seem to be routine es, rather serving to keep the system in place.

<sup>5</sup> It is for this reason that the PCD does not work.

been the case of the African Union and the regional integration institutions (RECs), a supranational framework cooperation among African States.

30. The European Union is the most successful endeavor in the world of a peaceful construction of a supranational grouping of sovereign states. One would have expected that the establishment of the African Union, by following the peaceful same logic, would encourage multifaceted cooperation that would contribute to the strengthening of the integration of both groupings, including the integration of Africa. But as one has been able to see, the European Union has never treated Africa as a one and indivisible entity. In addition, the EU has imposed the negotiation of Free Trade Agreements called Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between Europe and the ACP countries and regions, whereas Europe itself was built by protection itself and growing its domestic market before contemplating to lower its customs barriers. Already in 2000, ACP countries and African countries in particular, tried to resist the establishment of the EPAs. For the African Union, the EPAs could indeed thwart the intra- and interregional trade promotion efforts within and between RECs, whose promotion should contribute to the ultimate goal of creation of the pan-African common market<sup>6</sup>. Numerous European experts but also African experts underlined the risks of such trade liberalization towards Europe, given the difference in terms of development level between the two continents<sup>7</sup>. For them, the EPAs have as a corollary the loss of competitiveness of African economies; the loss of customs resources while these resources still constitute the bulk of public resources in many African countries; and the lower response capabilities of national governments that the application of structural adjustment policies have fairly impaired. This concern was echoed at the highest level by His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, former Chairperson of the African Union Commission, at the first Europe / Africa Summit in 2007 in Lisbon (Portugal), requesting a rediscussion of the European position . The Commission and the European Union have however not satisfied this request and preferred to exclude the question of the EPAs from the political dialogue between the European Union and the African Union within the framework of the JAES.

31. Despite these warnings and statements, the EPA process has continued and continues inexorably, to such an extent that it feeds for example dissension within West Africa between the countries that have signed interim EPAs like Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, and those who, like Nigeria, resist signing the EPA with ECOWAS. This tension may result in a decline in the dynamics of regional integration for which ECOWAS is cited nonetheless as an example in all of Africa. The "investment"

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<sup>6</sup> The negotiations for the creation of a "continental free trade area" were launched in 2015. This pan-African free trade area should cover more than one billion people and represent a GDP of more than US\$ 3 trillion.

<sup>7</sup> African Heads of State had requested in 2004 during the African Union Summit in Maputo the establishment of a monitoring system to assess the impacts of the implementation of the EPAs.

component that is part of the EPAs and obliges national governments to create "favorable conditions for investment" by many incentives and exemptions, deregulation, not only tax but also social and environmental incentives, has had the effect of encourage European multinational companies, especially in the mining and commodities sector. These multinational companies tend to perpetuate in a lasting manner the inclusion of the ACP States, and particularly African countries, in mining, which delays the diversification of the economies of these countries and the increase in the value chain of their products. Moreover, these multinational companies rarely pay taxes for profits they derive from their activities and are widely involved in tax evasion in both Africa and Europe<sup>8</sup>. Here, too, the public authorities in Europe and Africa need to cooperate to restore the capacity of the national governments to mobilize taxes, especially among multinational companies, and, thanks to the mobilization of domestic resources, carve out for themselves the leeway necessary for the rehabilitation of the role of the "public authorities" in the organization and regulation of the economic, social and cultural life.

32. On the eve of the renegotiation of a new post-Cotonou Agreement, one should indeed ask questions on the issue of the real impact of EPAs on the future of the partnership between Europe and Africa and have the courage to address this issue in a real political dialogue, and if need be to turn back if the continuation of this initiative is likely to lead to serious tensions within African countries and in relations between Europe and Africa. Furthermore, the establishment of common mechanisms and rules to regulate the promotion of foreign investment and to promote tax justice; and the fight against illicit flows should be a strategic priority of a new partnership between Europe and Africa in the name of the common interest and shared values.

33. The new commitments made by the international community around Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, the Climate Agenda and around the future World Urban Agenda offer an opportunity to be seized for a beneficial reorientation of the Europe / Africa partnership. These agendas that are universal in scope and defined according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, do offer a stronger and a more legitimate basis in the negotiation of the Europe/Africa partnership, with unprecedented prospects in terms of influence on the peaceful orientation of world affairs, provided that Europe and Africa understand well the interest of a fair partnership based on complementarities of the respective two regions.

34. Furthermore, as people have seen, the governance architecture of the two regions has similarities in favor of the respect of the principle of congruent forms: The European Union as the African Union has a political leadership body, namely the Council in the case of the European Union, and the Conference in the case of the

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<sup>8</sup> The growth of foreign investment and multinational companies in the mining sector has been accompanied by an explosion of financial illicit flows which deprive today Africa of US\$ 60 billion annually.

African Union; they have an executive body : the Commission ; they have a deliberating body : the Parliament; both Unions have advisory bodies that are integrated into the governance architecture, such as the Committee of Regions in the case of the European Union, or the High Council of Local Authorities that is currently being established in the case of African Union. Finally, as is the case of the European Union, the African Union has put in place various instruments and adopted a number of texts on rights, standards and principles of democracy, governance, human rights, and women's rights, that were so far largely ignored in the context of the Cotonou agreements in favor of the sole principles laid down by the European Union<sup>9</sup>. Both groupings have civil societies and a private sector that are structured and organized in each region. These two groupings therefore have the necessary ingredients to establish more equalitarian partnership relationships around the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, the Climate Agenda, the World Urban Agenda, the Migration Agenda, and the Security and Peace Agenda.

35. The European Union says that Agenda 2030 is at the heart of its overall strategy. Referring to SDGs for the definition of its development diplomacy, the European Union wants to anchor its global strategy in concrete goals. In turn, the action plan in preparation for the implementation of Africa's Agenda 2063 is largely based on the international consensus in favor of Agenda 2030, the Climate Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. There is thus a unique opportunity for the definition of a Europe / Africa partnership that revives the spirit of co-development and promotion of the mutually beneficial interest that was the basis of the initial Yaoundé and Lomé agreements. These agreements ensured for more than 20 years a sustained growth of Europe and of the ACP group and maintained their strong alliance during international negotiations.

36. Achieving the 17 SDGs offers indeed a unique opportunity to put on the agenda the spirit of co-development that had been behind the cooperation of the EU and the ACP group, and to get inspiration from such spirit to establish a renewed political partnership between the EU and Africa. The revisited spirit of co-development should help strengthen ties between Europe and Africa so that these two groupings work for the structural transformation of their economies in view of the adoption of development trajectories that are environmentally more sustainable and socially more inclusive. The application of the principles of co-responsibility and co-accountability must be part of the design and the implementation of that partnership. This partnership will be even more solid as the results to be achieved at different moments have been defined by mutual agreement as part of an inclusive political dialogue involving not only national governments, but also the other relevant stakeholders, in compliance with the principle of congruent forms mentioned in paragraph 34 above. One of the major innovations of the new partnership should be to consider sub-national territories

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<sup>9</sup> African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM); Commission on Human's and Peoples' Rights; African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights; Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), etc.

as audit areas for achieving the SDGs. In these circumstances, the local authorities should be particularly empowered to account for the achievement of SDGs in their jurisdiction, but also organize the consultations that are necessary for the creation of synergy between the various stakeholders. This new partnership will necessarily result in the revision of the instruments and procedures used currently, with the aim of harmonizing and simplifying them.

37. In conclusion, it is clear that the adoption of a new overall European strategy and the concomitant launch of new negotiations to redefine the European cooperation framework for the next 20 years do represent a major opportunity to rethink fundamentally the Europe's strategy vis-à-vis Africa, to rebuild a genuine political dialogue with all of Africa, and to define a new ambitious cooperation framework, that is innovative and based on the awareness of the inextricable intertwined destinies of Europe and Africa in the face of global and regional issues. A smart political partnership between Europe (one of the leading economic and financial powers in the world) and Africa (one of the most important reservoirs of raw materials and soon the largest population hub in the world) will necessarily lead to the emergence of a strong grouping whose positions will undoubtedly weigh on global governance. It is only in this way that Europe and Africa whose respective populations see the sun rise and set at the same time, will deserve their rightful place in the community of nations at this specific time of history of Mankind where we are the last generation to be able to act against climate change; and the first generation able to eradicate poverty around the world !

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