



**Sommet Union Africaine - Union Européenne 2017**  
**African Union - European Union Summit 2017**

29 - 30 Novembre 2017  
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

## DECLARATION OF THE AFRICA-EUROPE FORUM OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

We, as leaders of local and regional governments of the Member States of the African Union and of the European Union, meeting on 27 November 2017 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, on the side-line of the 5<sup>th</sup> EU-Africa Summit of Heads of State and Government of the two regions, address this declaration to the institutions and Member States of the Africa Union and European Union:

### OUR APPRECIATION ON TODAY'S CONTEXT:

- **Considering** the importance of developing and maintaining a structured and continuous dialogue at the highest level between Europe and Africa, through the organisation of African Union/European Union Summits;
- **Given** the changes that have occurred in recent years in the political environment at the level of each region and globally, as well as the multiple crises affecting both Africa and Europe;
- **Considering** that it is more than ever necessary to give a new impetus and greater ambition to the AU-EU political partnership, to bring shared, innovative and sustainable solutions to the increasingly complex challenges and issues faced today and tomorrow;
- **Recalling** that the AU/EU Summit in Abidjan in 2017 takes place at a key moment in the history of the two regions, particularly the reintegration of Morocco within the African Union, and the opening of discussions on the Post Cotonou Agreement which shall provide an overall guiding framework for the Africa/Europe relations from 2020 onwards;
- **Given the commitments** of African Union Heads of State and Government in favour of decentralisation as expressed by the adoption of the African Charter of the Values and principles of decentralisation, local governance and local development, and the creation of the High Council of local authorities as consultative body of the African Union, during the Malabo Conference in Equatorial Guinea, in June 2014;
- **Given the commitments** expressed in the European Charter of local self-government, as well as European Union's recognition of the role of local governments within the international cooperation and development policies expressed in the 2008 Communication "Local authorities: actors of development" and the 2013 Communication "Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes";
- **Aware** that every country and region of the world must now enshrine their policies and strategies within the frameworks of the major regional and global agendas, in particular within

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the African Union's Agenda 2063, the new European Consensus on Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda;

- **Convinced** that to be strong and sustainable, and to concretely impact people's lives, the EU-Africa political partnership must include, mobilise and create synergies between all relevant actors at the different levels of governance, from local to global, national, sub-regional and continental levels;
- **Convinced** that the development of cooperation between territories contributes to the emergence of an environment defined by understanding and mutual respect, which favours pacific and amicable relations between the people of both continents;
- **Convinced** that equality between women and men is both a major objective for our societies and a critical driver of social, economic and environmental development, and that inequalities affecting women to access decision making, education, economic resources and health, must therefore be fought;
- **Recognising** that the condition of youth in our societies will be one of the key indicators to assess the success or failure of any strategy for inclusive and sustainable development;
- **Certain** that local economic development is one of the key factors for inclusive and sustainable growth, as long as it is based on fiscal decentralization, an appropriate legislative, regulatory, institutional and financial environment, ensuring greater autonomy of local and regional authorities in governance and in taking initiatives and actions within cities and territories;
- **Considering** the dramatic situation of displaced people or migrants seeking better opportunities and living conditions, and that the final responsibility of temporarily or permanently hosting migrants, ensuring dignified and fair conditions lies with cities and territories in both Africa and Europe, and **reminding** that migrant populations leave one local government to settle in another local government in a host country in Africa or Europe;
- **Agreeing** that migration should therefore be viewed as a way of bringing Africa and Europe closer, to stimulate the meeting of cultures, while respecting the principle of equal dignity, to share and disseminate know-how and the revival of genuine co-development between our two regions involving migrants and the diaspora.

## OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION:

1. **We support** the organisation of a continuous dialogue at the highest level between Africa and Europe, with the objective of developing a genuine partnership between the two regions, and **we commit** ourselves to contribute by sharing grassroots experience, embodied by the sphere of governance closest to the citizens and to the realities they live in;
2. **We welcome** that the AU-EU Summit of Abidjan has scheduled on its agenda the discussion of strategic issues that affect the EU-Africa relations and have an impact on the people living in our cities and regions, and particularly the major issues related to access to energy, youth employment, education and participation in public life, as well as the challenges related to migration and human mobility, climate change and sustainable inclusive development.

3. **We are determined** to mobilise the vital forces of our cities and territories, especially young people and women, to participate more actively in the dynamics of structural transformation promoted by the African Union's Agenda 2063, the new European Consensus on Development, and global agendas adopted by the international community, with the aim of leaving no one behind.
4. **We commit** to align our decentralised cooperation actions with the concerns of the Africa/Europe Partnership, and to communicate demands coming from the people of our local and regional governments in the appropriate fora of the Partnership Agreement to ensure that the renewed Joint Africa/Europe Strategy (JAES) and action plans deriving from them are in tune with the expectations and realities experienced by the people of the two regions at the grassroots level;
5. **We commit** to include a gender approach at all steps of our territorial development and decentralised cooperation activities, so as to better answer the needs of women and men in both regions, and so that our development cooperation contributes effectively to reducing gender inequalities;
6. **We commit** to increase investments in our local and regional governments in the field of youth education and vocational training, as well as in the field of women's empowerment, with the perspective to offer to all better employment and income opportunities where they live, in our cities and territories;
7. **We strongly promote** the involvement of our cities and territories in the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. Our cities and territories are the most appropriate settings to translate the commitments set at national level (NDCs) into action, in view of the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We therefore ask that local governments' access to climate finance is facilitated.

#### **OUR PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN THE AU-EU PARTNERSHIP:**

8. **We insist** on the importance of including representatives of European and African local and regional governments in the framework of the high-level dialogue AU-EU, as development players and as stakeholders fostering regional integration and cooperation between the two regions;
9. **We call for** the partnership to be organised in the framework of the two regional unions, which governance structure allows for a fair, inclusive and multi-stakeholder dialogue (national governments, parliaments, local and regional governments, civil society, private sector);
10. **We call on** the Member States of the African Union that have not done so yet to sign and/or ratify the African Charter on the Values and principles of decentralisation, local governance and local development, and support the implementation of the High Council of Local Authorities of the African Union;
11. **We encourage** the African Union to involve local and regional governments in its early warning mechanisms on conflicts and in the sustainable recovery from conflicts at the local

governments' level, in order to manage tensions and to prevent them from transforming into open crises;

12. **We call for** a redefinition of the JAES in order to implement the political partnership between Europe and Africa, supported by appropriate financial instruments that treat Africa as one;
13. **In consequence**, we ask for the creation of a dedicated financial instrument to support AU-EU political partnership. We believe such an instrument should be an integrated part of the post-Cotonou agreement – which should moreover include a regional dimension covering Africa as a whole;
14. **We call** for the launch of an ambitious programme “Youth Employment” that mobilises African and European youth creativity, fosters the creation of economic activities and job creation within our territories, and encouraging exchanges and mutual learning between young people from Africa and from Europe;
15. **We also call** for the JAES to support initiatives and actions fostering participation in local public life such as the Network of Elected Women of Africa – REFELA and the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality, as well as exchange and mutual learning opportunities;
16. **We highlight the need** for any project aimed at mobilising domestic or external private investment in local development to be aligned and consistent with the development priorities of our cities and territories. Local economic growth should be sustainable and equitable. All infrastructure or business investment should be geared to this end and ideally include dedicated attention for businesses belonging to the popular economy sector (informal sector) and to the social and solidarity economy, which account for more than 60% of jobs in African towns and villages.

#### OUR PROPOSAL FOR THE WAY FORWARD:

17. **We welcome** the support from the European Union and the African Union for the organisation of an Africa-Europe Forum of Local and Regional Governments, **and call for** local and regional governments and their representative organisations to be systematically included and involved in the dialogue on the AU/EU political partnership. Therefore, we ask that the Abidjan summit establish the Africa-Europe Forum of Local and Regional Governments as one of the official platforms of this political dialogue;
18. **We ask** that the Abidjan Summit authorises the organisation of an inclusive hearing of the main stakeholders involved in this political dialogue, in order for the spokespersons of the Forum to benefit from the opportunity to present the conclusions and recommendations of the Forum's work to the Heads of State and Government of the two regions.

Adopted in Abidjan, 27 November 2017

The Forum

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