

The EU-Africa Partnership: Another Lost Year? *

Arnold H. Kammel

The relationship between the European Union and Africa is deeply rooted in history, but has long been limited to the sole issues of trade and development cooperation through the Yaoundé and subsequent Lomé partnership agreements between the EU and the Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) group of states. Since the 1990's, EU-Africa relations are being increasingly politicized and securitized as was apparent in the two last Lomé agreements and the latest document between the EU and Africa, the Cotonou Agreement, signed in 2000. In addition, the first EU-Africa Summit held in 2000 in Cairo extended the scope of cooperation between both continents by the broadening the framework of political cooperation. The EU-Africa-Summit in April 2014 marked the last gathering between the two continents. Therefore, it is necessary to take stock of EU-Africa relations following the agreements of the Summit.

From Yaoundé to Cotonou: Setting up Trade Relations between the EU and the ACP

A more institutionalized relationship between Europe and African countries developed especially in the area of trade leaving aside forms of political cooperation as especially the former colonies were not in favor of a new regime with their former colonial powers. Trade in goods between the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries on the one hand and the members of the European Community (later European Union) on the other hand, has been subject to a specific regime as early as in the 1960s, i.e. very soon after most of the ACP countries became independent. From the association agreements of Yaoundé I and II between the European Communities and former French colonies in Africa (1963-1975), throughout the successive ACP-EU Lomé Conventions (1975-2000), unto the

recent Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou (2000), specific trade regimes have been jointly agreed upon by the parties, as part of package including financial aid, and, to varying extents, political dialogue. However, as already indicated, a strategic dimension for the relationship between the EU and Africa was missing until early 2000.

The Joint Africa-EU-Strategy (JAES): Objectives and Priorities

Taking the lessons learnt from the first Africa-Europe Summit in Cairo in 2000, it became obvious that the partnership should be framed in a strategic document comprising the visions and expectations with regard to the relations between the two continents. As a first attempt, the European Commission took the initiative and subsequently the European Council adopted the first EU Strategy for Africa in 2005. This strategy aimed to improve EUs relationship with Africa and was supposed to be governed by the principles of equality, ownership and partnership. However, directly after the launching in 2005, the strategy was heavily criticized for a lack of African ownership and involvement of Africa in the creation of the strategy. Several African leaders expressed concern that the European Union had not consulted them on the EU Strategy for Africa, and that any strategy should be jointly developed and owned by both Africa and Europe. Their concern was that the EU Strategy for Africa had a European bias (Twyuschik and Sheriff 2009, 2). After a long discussion and major consultations, both EU and AU jointly started to prepare a new strategy that would adjust the deficiency of the earlier one. Both sides committed themselves to a cultural shift in their relations, new ways of relating to and engaging each other in the world (Mangala 2013, 23).

In December 2007, the second Africa-EU Summit took place in Lisbon adopting a land-mark document "the Africa EU Strategic Partnership. A Joint Africa-EU Strategy" (JAES). The objective of the JAES and its first Action Plan (2008-2010) is the establishment of a much more overtly political relationship than had been the case through Lomé, Cotonou, or the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Bach 2011: 40). The JAES is a vision for a long-term relationship between Africa and Europe in which the two should come together in a shared framework for stronger collaboration on a new strategic level. This shall include peacekeeping and established thematic partnerships between the two organizations.

The stated aim of the strategy is as follows: *"The purpose of this Joint Strategy is to take the Africa-EU relationship to a new, strategic level with a strengthened political partnership and enhanced cooperation at all levels. The partnership will be based on a Euro-African consensus on values, common interests and common strategic objectives. This partnership should strive to bridge the development divide between Africa and Europe through the strengthening of economic cooperation and the promotion of sustainable development in both continents, living side by side in peace, security, prosperity, solidarity and human dignity."* (JAES 2007, 2).

The Joint Africa- EU Strategy identifies four main objectives of the long-term strategic partnership:

i) to reinforce and elevate the Africa-EU political partnership to address issues of common concern (peace and security, migration and development, and a clean environment); ii) to strengthen and promote peace, security, democratic governance and human rights, fundamental freedoms, gender equality, sustainable economic de-

