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PARTNERSHIP FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

Sustained growth is a prerequisite for poverty reduction. Any development policy must reflect a breakdown of resources which takes into account the effect that such resources have upon poverty reduction. The scope of Africa's relations with the EU has deepened continuously - in both terms of high-level political consultations and growth in economic relations and development cooperation.

The European Union is a major player in the development process of the African continent, in the realisation of the African Agenda and in the meeting of NEPAD objectives. An increase in the number of external partners, the introduction of new instruments and increased financial resources illustrate a vibrant contribution towards a strategic partnership between two vast continents. The success of EU-Africa relations will determine the European Union's credibility on the international stage.

The EU provides approximately half of all public aid to the developing world and is the key trading partner of numerous developing countries. This effort reflects the essential solidarity which is an underlying feature of its international activity.

A key objective for the EU-Africa Partnership should be to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty on the African continent. This objective entails support for sustainable economic, social and environmental development, promotion of the gradual integration of the developing countries into the world economy and a determination to combat inequality.

The EU Strategy for Africa, endorsed by the European Council in December 2005, is a broad-based plan of implementation focussing on challenges that concern all role players in Africa's development. The EU has stressed that Africa is not alone when facing its numerous challenges. We welcome the fact that the EU fully supports various African initiatives aimed at socio-economic and political development and offers its own (EU) experiences regarding regional integration. The EU can be further commended for committing to the necessary and appropriate financial contributions in order to pursue concrete goals emanating from EU – Africa cooperation.

AREAS OF EU – AFRICA COOPERATION

EU-AU Troika Meetings:

The holding of the bi-annual EU – AU Ministerial Troika meetings are one of the main mediums for conducting EU relations with Africa and ensuring that EU international commitments materialise into concrete projects for the African continent. The current EU Strategy for Africa is an attempt to work within a strategic partnership framework in order for Africa to attain the UN MDGs. The Strategy is all encompassing, with a focus

on overall socio-economic development and improving aid levels and effectiveness throughout Africa.

Key Themes:

In order for the EU-Africa Partnership to grow from strength to strength and sustain itself, concrete actions should be undertaken in line with the key themes of the EU Strategy for Africa and the NEPAD – an AU endorsed socio-economic development programme. These would include: peace and security, good and effective governance, trade, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, regional integration and investing in people.

The key focus should be on creating the necessary economic environment for development. This should include economic growth, trade promotion, infrastructural development and human capacity building. In addition, EU-Africa cooperation should push for investment in areas important for the fulfilment of the MDGs, such as health, education and the environment. In this regard, the EU Strategy for Africa's reaffirmation of earlier commitments to increase EU aid to Africa and to improve aid effectiveness is encouraged.

There is a need to exchange relevant policy documents on agriculture. The exchange of "know-how" and policy experience will strengthen African Union capacity in the environmental and natural resources area.

There is a further need for collaboration between the AU and the EU on a broad range of governance-related issues. These include institutional development and capacity building; the promotion of free, fair and democratic elections; respect for human and people's rights; constitutionalism and respect for the rule of law; combating corruption; consolidating effective public service systems; effective decentralisation (local governance) and improving governance in the security and corporate sectors.

Infrastructural Development:

Priority is to also be given to further cooperation in the area of infrastructure. In this regard, the launch in July 2006 of the EU-Africa Infrastructure Partnership should be commended as an excellent illustration of closer collaboration between Europe and Africa. This constitutes the EU's response to the NEPAD Infrastructure Action Plan as endorsed by the African Union. The Partnership will support programmes in the sectors of transport, energy, water and sanitation and ICTs that facilitate interconnectivity at continental and regional level.

The establishment of the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund as an innovative instrument has been welcomed. The Fund will be open to the contributions of the EU Member States and other key development partners. This will help attract investments to Africa in the areas of infrastructure and there will be a key role for African institutions to play in the operationalisation of this Fund.

Post-Conflict Reconstruction:

EU support for post-conflict reconstruction, as part of the efforts to consolidate peace and promote sustainable development on the continent, is crucial. Sustained support has

been called for in African countries emerging out of conflicts including Sudan, Liberia, Burundi, Central African Republic and the Comoros. There has also been a call for enhanced cooperation, including through the exchange of experiences between the AU and the EU in this regard.

EU commitment to support the strengthening of African capabilities in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa should continue. Financial and technical support for further development of the African Peace and Security Architecture should be provided under the African Peace Facility.

African Peer Review Mechanism:

There is an urgent need for financial and technical resources to be allocated towards the implementation of the recommendations of the African Peer Review Mechanism. All international partners have been urged to assist in this regard. Although many countries have acceded to the Peer Review Mechanism, they have not launched the process due to the lack of resources and technical capacity. Further collaboration with the EU is required to assist these countries kick-start the review process.

Energy:

It is encouraging to note that at the EU – AU Troika Meeting in Brazzaville on 8-10 October 2006, European and African Ministers acknowledged the ongoing work within the EU for a Strategic Europe Energy Review. They committed themselves to strengthen the political EU-Africa Dialogue on Energy. Furthermore, they called for a comprehensive Europe-Africa energy partnership including the sustainable exploitation of resources.

Capacity Building:

Lastly, a historic visit of the European Commission to the African Union in Addis Ababa took place in October 2006. The outcome of this meeting led to the signing of the Euro 55 million grant Financing Agreement for capacity building of the African Union Commission. The African Union Commission, the European Commission and the Council Secretariat were encouraged to further enhance their policy dialogue and to exchange experiences, via the EU-AU Task Force.

EU – AFRICA RELATIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The EU-Africa Partnership should be seen within the context of other key international initiatives. We encourage EU commitments to supporting the implementation of NEPAD in the context of the WSSD, the Monterrey Declaration and the UN Millennium Summit. Support for these development agendas is crucial for the success, relevance and viability of cooperation between the European and African continents.

Africa furthermore welcomes EU support and commitment for an effective multilateral system based on the rule of law and the need for a United Nations better equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century. In this regard, the EU's commitment to early and full implementation of the reforms and commitments at the 2005 UN World Summit is immensely encouraged.

Progress has been made in recent years regarding the MDGs. However, Africa has largely been left behind. New measures are needed including more and better aid from development partners and improved policies and governance from developing countries. Hence, the importance of taking African cooperation the EU a step further.

A key focus to assist Africa would be to increase the quantity and quality of development finance and strengthen policy coherence for development. In addition, associating non-aid policies such as trade, agriculture, fisheries, security, to the MDG agenda is vital.

The momentum for a Joint EU-Africa Strategy will further contribute to the G8 Development Agenda for Africa. It is important to note that four of the eight G8 countries are members of the EU. The partnership would also contribute towards the African Partnership Forum (APF) efforts to increase awareness and concretise international support for development in Africa.

Therefore, the EU is a major international player and contributor to sustainable development, aimed at poverty eradication, on the African continent. The African side will have to ensure that, within the context of the EU – Africa Political Dialogue, the allocation of EU resources for the financing of NEPAD endorsed priority projects is maintained.

EU DEVELOPMENT AID

EU Development Ministers have agreed to increase EU aid to 0.56% of the Gross National Income (GNI) by 2010, in order to reach the 0.7% target by 2015. The EU has estimated that this increase would amount to an additional Euros 20 billion annually by 2010. The ten “new” Member States will endeavour to increase their Official Development Assistance to reach 0.17% of GNI by 2010.

Africa has welcomed this common European Union strategy. It is encouraging to note that the strategy will bring together Member States, the European Parliament and other EU institutions around a common vision for development aid. Furthermore, it is comforting to note that the European Commission will implement country specific policies that will take into account the situation in each country.

It cannot be over emphasised that priorities for action need to be defined and strategies need to be drawn up as soon as possible. External aid management has to be reshaped so as to ensure more efficient allocation of resources. EU Member States should be encouraged to coordinate development cooperation policies and consult each other on their aid programmes. In light of this, the OECD Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness should be fully implemented by both EU and African countries.

WAY FORWARD ON THE JOINT EU-AFRICA STRATEGY

Following the 5th EU –Africa Ministerial Troika meeting in Bamako, 2005, a decision was taken to create a Joint EU-Africa Strategy using the current EU Strategy for Africa and the Joint EU - AU Implementation Matrix as the points of reference. A Joint Strategy for Africa will further intensify areas of cooperation with the EU – based on African priority needs. As already indicated, a key area of cooperation will focus on the EU – Africa Partnership for Infrastructure and the related Trust Fund.

It was encouraging to note that both the EU and the AU recently, at the 7th EU- Africa Ministerial Troika Meeting in Brazzaville on 8-10 October 2006, welcomed progress made on the preparation of the Joint EU-Africa Strategy. In this context, both parties agreed to expedite work towards the possible holding of the second Europe-Africa Summit in Lisbon during 2007.

European and African Ministers have furthermore agreed to a roadmap for further work to be undertaken on the Joint EU-Africa Strategy. An Expert Group composed of Troika members has been mandated to resume work on the Outline by starting consultations with civil society and other stakeholders. The results are to be presented at next Troika meeting in May 2007. On this basis, a final draft outline will be considered with both sides elaborating on the strategy for adoption at the 2nd Europe-Africa Summit.

The implementation of a Joint EU-Africa Strategy will be a long-term process and will require considerable political will and the maintenance of a climate of trust. The current momentum cannot be lost.

WAY FORWARD ON THE JOINT EU / AU IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

On 10 August 2006, the Troika Ambassadors met in Addis Ababa. They reviewed the updated version of the Joint Implementation Matrix and endorsed it. At this occasion, the Troika Ambassadors emphasised the need to put more effort into the implementation of the commitments outlined in the Joint Implementation Matrix. It was argued that this would give more value to the EU-Africa dialogue. They agreed that the Joint Implementation Matrix should continue to be a living document and that it should focus on commitments and programmes under implementation.

The EU-Africa Troika Meeting in Brazzaville last month furthermore stressed that there was a need to monitor and follow-up on the actual implementation of commitments made by each side. It was decided that future updates of the Joint Implementation Matrix will take place at six month intervals.

NEPAD LINKAGES

A strengthened EU – Africa Partnership will also contribute towards the NEPAD objectives of a new global partnership with industrialised countries and multilateral organisations. This NEPAD objective aims at creating opportunities for international efforts targeting development cooperation. The EU-Africa relationship further solidifies and is a continuance of commitments made in the Africa – Europe Summit's Cairo Plan of Action.

In addition, the EU Governance Initiative for Africa aims at sustaining democracy and the meeting of NEPAD conditions for sustainable development. The EU Strategy for Africa and the Joint EU – AU Implementation Matrix address various NEPAD sectoral priorities with an emphasis on the bridging of the infrastructure gap. Furthermore, the EU – Africa Political Dialogue makes a concerted effort to address NEPAD concerns relating to the mobilisation of resources via effective aid management and harmonisation.

However, it should be noted that the practical implementation of the EU's Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) could impact upon the NEPAD Market Access Initiative - by curbing the promotion of African exports into the EU.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Mr Chairperson, ownership of strategies by the African countries is the key to the success of any development policy to be implemented on the African continent. Bearing that in mind, we should encourage wide-ranging participation from all segments of society. This will ensure greater equality for the participation of the poorest in the fruits of growth and the strengthening of African democratic systems.

It is therefore welcoming to notice that the EU attaches great importance to the quality of dialogue with partner countries. This is further underscored by the importance the EU attributes towards strengthening the role of civil society participation in promoting human rights and facilitating its networking and dialogue

The European and African Troika Ministers indicated that both parties had taken an important step towards solidifying relations between the EU and Africa. Both parties expressed their satisfaction with the deliberations. The 7th Troika Meeting was viewed as a continuation of the EU – Africa Political Dialogue. This is a highly encouraging state of affairs between the two continents.

Finally, an EU – Africa Partnership will contribute towards strengthening democracy, consolidating peace and preventing conflict. There will be a gradual integration into the world economy coupled with heightened social and environmental awareness aimed at sustainable development. EU and African Ministers have reaffirmed their shared responsibility, in this regard. It is a responsibility that neither side intends to take very lightly.

Thank you.