

Peace and Security in the new Africa-EU Partnership: Recommendations for civil society participation

Introduction

'People must remain at the heart of our partnership, so we pledge today to provide them with the opportunities they need.'

Declaration - Fourth EU-Africa Summit, 2-3 April 2014, Brussels

The purpose of this short statement is to provide suggestions for civil society participation in the peace and security priority area of the revised Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) believes that increased civil society participation in both policy formulation and the implementation of activities related to peacebuilding and conflict prevention will contribute to the achievement of the JAES objective of strengthening and promoting peace and security.¹ EPLO has been the focal point for European civil society on the JAES Peace and Security Partnership since 2008.²

Building on the first phase

When it was launched in 2007, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy was greeted with enthusiasm by civil society organisations (CSOs). The idea of a 'joint' strategy aimed at moving the relationship between Africa and the European Union (EU) beyond a donor-recipient framework was a welcome development, particularly since it was billed as a 'people-centred partnership' in which ongoing dialogue with civil society would be a 'key component'.³

The JAES' ambitious aim of bringing together a wide range of stakeholders (continental and regional institutions, countries, civil society etc.) from Africa and the EU in eight different thematic partnerships⁴ has at times been undermined by shortcomings in its implementation. Civil society stakeholders have found the functioning of the partnerships to be cumbersome and time-consuming but without adequate opportunities to contribute on content. Although it was regularly presented as the most successful of the eight JAES partnerships, the functioning of the Peace and Security Partnership has also been the subject of criticism from several EU Member States and CSOs, including EPLO.⁵

One of the difficulties has been an insistence on civil society coordination across all thematic areas. EPLO's vision is of civil society with specialist knowledge engaging with policy-makers to assist in realising the JAES objective of strengthening and promoting peace and security.

Africa-EU Summit 2014: Reforming and reviving the JAES

The Fourth Africa-EU Summit which took place on 2-3 April 2014 in Brussels resulted in a number of positive outcomes, including recognition that the implementation of the JAES

¹ [The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: A Joint Africa-EU Strategy](#), Paragraph 8

² In this capacity, EPLO and its member organisations have participated in and contributed to all relevant JAES civil society activities, including the EU Implementation Team and the Joint Expert Group for the Peace and Security Partnership, the Joint AU-EU Task Force and the Africa-EU Civil Society Intercontinental Dialogue Forum for the JAES (October 2013, Brussels).

³ The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: A Joint Africa-EU Strategy, Paragraph 8

⁴ (1) Peace and security; (2) Democratic governance and human rights; (3) Regional integration, trade and infrastructure; (4) Millennium Development Goals; (5) Energy; (6) Climate change and environment; (7) Migration, mobility and employment; and (8) Science, information society and space.

⁵ See previous EPLO statements: [The Joint Africa-EU Strategy](#) (October 2007); [Recommendations for the implementation of the Peace and Security Partnership of the Joint Africa - EU Strategy](#) (October 2008); [Recommendations for the Second Action Plan for the Peace and Security Partnership of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy](#) (September 2010). Concerns were also raised during meetings of the European Civil Society Steering Group for the JAES with representatives from the EU, and during the Africa-EU Civil Society Intercontinental Dialogue Forum in October 2013.

should be 'further improved'.⁶ In the Roadmap 2014-2017, participants in the Summit (i.e. African and EU heads of state and government) acknowledged that 'some of the technical expert structures have not always been efficient' and agreed that 'Africa and the EU shall jointly identify, where needed, the working mechanisms and structures required to implement the agreed actions and reach the expected results.'⁷ This should result in the discontinuation of the informal Joint Expert Groups (iJEGs).

Summit participants also agreed to replace the eight thematic partnerships with five priority areas: (1) peace and security; (2) democracy, good governance and human rights; (3) human development, (4) sustainable and inclusive development and growth and continental integration; and (5) global and emerging issues.⁸

EPLO welcomed the decisions to rethink the JAES implementation mechanisms and to reform the thematic partnerships. It also welcomed EU heads of state and government's commitment to 'cooperate more closely in preventing conflicts' and their agreement on 'the importance of tackling the root causes of instability, fragility and conflict'.⁹

EPLO supports the use, where possible, of existing structures for dialogue with civil society between Africa and the EU on the topics covered by the five priority areas (e.g. the African Union (AU)-EU Human Rights Dialogue for the 'Democracy, good governance and human rights' priority). However, since there is currently no pre-existing intercontinental structure involving civil society for dialogue on peace and security, it will be necessary to ensure that the new working mechanisms for the Peace and Security priority area are set up to provide civil society with sufficient space to contribute to discussions.

Similarly, EPLO believes that it will be important to ensure that the Peace and Security priority area reflects African and EU heads of state and government's commitment to conflict prevention and tackling the root causes of conflict. To date, the Peace and Security Partnership agenda has reflected the existing imbalances in the funding priorities of the African Peace Facility (APF), for example, the disproportionate focus on peace support operations; civilian conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities have often been overlooked in favour of military and short-term crisis management aspects of peace and security.

'The Council recognises the essential role of CSOs in the peace and security agenda, particularly in conflict prevention and state building.'

Council conclusions on 'The roots of Democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations' 3191st Foreign Affairs (Development) Council meeting, Luxembourg, 15 October 2012

⁶ [Fourth Africa-EU Summit – Roadmap 2014-2017](#), Paragraph 2

⁷ *Ibid.*, Paragraph 5

⁸ *Ibid.*, Paragraph 6

⁹ [Fourth Africa-EU Summit – Declaration](#), Paragraph 16

Recommendations

In line with EPLO's mandate¹⁰, the following recommendations only target the EU and potential joint Africa-EU working mechanisms; we leave it for our African civil society counterparts to provide recommendations to the AU, as well as on joint working mechanisms.

1. Strengthening civil society's contribution to policy formulation

Policy formulation under the JAES could benefit from civil society's rich and varied expertise on specific conflicts and thematic issues. CSOs with specialist knowledge of peace and security issues from both Africa and Europe should, therefore, be given the opportunity to:

- Give briefings to members of the Council of the EU's Africa Working Party (COAFR)
- Give briefings to members of the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC), in particular in advance of the annual joint consultative meeting between the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) and the EU PSC
- Give briefings to members of the AU PSC and the EU PSC in advance of and during joint field missions
- Participate (as a minimum as observers) in the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) of the APF. (NB/ This is based on the assumption that, as planned, this structure replaces the iJEG as the JAES technical discussion platform on peace and security)
- Organise and participate in informal dialogue meetings with policy-makers on topics of interest for the Peace and Security partnership. (NB/ These meetings could take place under the framework of the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN), an existing mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict)¹¹
- Organise and participate in annual conferences on peace and security with civil society, the AU, the EU and the regional economic communities (RECs)

2. Civil society in the design and monitoring of JAES peace and security activities

Civil society provides an important link between policy-makers and people in countries where activities foreseen under the JAES' Peace and Security priority area will take place. CSOs with specialist knowledge of peace and security issues from both Africa and Europe should, therefore, be given the opportunity to:

- Participate (as a minimum as observers) in JCC discussions on the design and implementation of APF activities
- Conduct independent monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the impact of APF-funded activities, particularly Peace Support Operations (PSOs), on peace and security, and to present findings to the JCC
- Participate in the planned Consultative Committee for the Pan-African Instrument.

3. Involving civil society in the implementation of JAES peace and security activities

Despite wide recognition of the added value of civil society's participation in the implementation of peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities, funding for such activities remains limited.

In order to strengthen existing African peace and security mechanisms and policies, CSOs working on peacebuilding in countries in Africa should be given the opportunity to:

- Participate in APF multi-stakeholder projects, together with the AU, the RECs and other intergovernmental institutions.

For all of the abovementioned recommendations, civil society should be able to self-select its representatives in a flexible way based on expertise, interest, inclusiveness and transparency.

¹⁰ EPLO's mission is to influence the EU to be more active and effective at promoting peace and preventing violent conflict throughout the world.

¹¹ See <http://www.eplo.org/civil-society-dialogue-network.html>