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## EPLO POLICY PAPER on the EU-Africa Joint Strategy

Since its creation, the African Union has made strong progress in building institutions and capacity to assume a leading role in the maintenance of peace and stability on the continent. Despite this progress, many African people are still faced with the serious effects of weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions, violence or the legacy of civil war. In these contexts, poverty reduction and basic human security is extremely difficult to achieve and sustain. The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) would like to strongly urge that the following points be incorporated into the EU-Africa Strategy:

- **Clarity about whom the Strategy serves.**

The Strategy is aimed at enhancing the relationship between the "EU" on one side and "Africa" on the other. This is obviously extremely welcome at a conceptual level but it is not clear whether we are talking about the African Union or about African political leaders or about Africans living on the continent as a whole. Africa, far from being a single entity, comprises many different actors, each with its own interests, goals and different perceptions of security, human rights, governance, and development challenges and opportunities among, and even within, countries. It is important to distinguish the different types of interlocutors and affected groups as real progress on peace and security requires an approach built on an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the complex web of factors that cause and sustain fragility. It is important that the Strategy acknowledge this complexity and include sufficient structures and policies to reflect it.

- **Support of AU capacity building in peace and security, based on a comprehensive understanding of peacebuilding.**

Crisis management capacity is undoubtedly important, and peace support operations can be essential for saving lives and providing the degree of short term stability necessary for longer-term activities to begin. The development of military capabilities, in the form of EU support to the African Peace Facility (APF) may therefore be seen by policy-makers as both necessary and useful. However, the EU should not give disproportionate attention to military capabilities to the detriment of civilian aspects of interventions. Crisis response is merely one aspect of peacebuilding. Building peace is about changing structures, attitudes and behaviours through activities in the over-lapping and interconnecting spheres of security, governance, economic development, justice and reconciliation. Consequently, the EU should ensure a long-term financial and technical engagement to support African early warning systems (on political, social, ethnic but also natural resources and environmental factors), capacity to conduct political dialogue through the AU Peace and Security Council, mediation capacity and other functions that would improve the *prevention* of violent conflict. Early warning analysis, peacebuilding activities, good offices missions, coordination of security and development policies need to be carried out by professional permanent African Union staff, and the EU's support should be aimed at building this capacity.

To ensure that peacebuilding activities can be developed and implemented efficiently, the EU should facilitate the strengthening of the following specific areas:

- *Supporting AU capacity in civilian crisis management and civilian peacekeeping:* When supporting AU capacity in crisis management, the EU

should place strong importance on civilian aspects including police, rule of law, civil administration, and civil protection. The Strategy represents a prime opportunity for building a standing professional corps of civilian experts rapidly deployable in crisis situations. Such a civilian peace force would deal both with protection and monitoring tasks as well as bridging the crisis interventions with the local civil society and begin peacebuilding activities.

- *Linking peacebuilding and transitional justice:* It should be acknowledged in the joint EU-Africa Strategy that the fight against impunity for violations of human rights is a priority in building stable and peaceful societies. The consolidation of peace in the immediate post-conflict period, as well as the maintenance of peace in the long term, is more likely to be achieved when the local population is confident that redress for abuse can be obtained through transitional justice mechanisms such as courts, truth commissions, security sector reforms, and victim reparation programs. Legacies of mass abuse of human rights must be addressed in order to build trust between citizens and the state and among citizens themselves.
- *Addressing Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW):* African people have borne the heavy cost of the trade in arms that has contributed to conflict in countries across the continent. Irresponsible transfers of arms to, and within, Africa have had a number of devastating impacts on security, governance and development, including: bolstering insurgent groups and undermining efforts at conflict prevention and transformation; increasing the availability of arms for use in violent crime; diverting resources away from vital sectors such as health and education; contributing to large scale displacement of people and reduced opportunities for income generation. Tackling the issue of SALW should be a key part of the "peace and security" chapter of the Joint EU – Africa strategy, as already acknowledged by the European Union in its SALW strategy (adopted in 2005).
- *Special needs of vulnerable groups in armed conflict:* Both the EU and AU must acknowledge the special needs of vulnerable groups, including children, women, older people, and disabled people, in conflict situations, and the important role they can play in peacebuilding. Addressing these needs begins with comprehensive assessment, systematic effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and the meaningful participation of civil society.
- *Special role of women in peacebuilding:* Women, as a group, are disproportionately affected by conflict than men. Their expertise, knowledge, and skills are under-utilised when it comes to early warning, planning for peace, and sustainable rebuilding after conflict. Outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, women can make a substantial contribution to building sustainable peace. Accessing, encouraging, and fostering these capabilities should be an integral part of the Strategy.
- *Special role of children and youth in peacebuilding:* Children and youth not only represent the largest demographic group on the African continent, but are also the one group with the greatest stake in a future of peace, security, and sustainable development. While children are often early victims of conflict, they can also become actors in the conflict (e.g as child soldiers, forced companions, spies, etc.) as well as play pivotal roles in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction of society. Taking these aspects into account, the Joint Strategy should pay special attention to the role of children and youth in conflict and peacebuilding. This includes safeguarding their rights, ensuring opportunities for their constructive participation, creating platforms for their engagement at local, national and continental levels, and making provisions for them in development strategies.

- *Appropriate responses:* Conflict situations are unique and dynamic, and responses should be flexible and context-specific.

- **Conflict sensitivity in all EU engagement**

Addressing peace and security in only one section of the Strategy is not enough. Rather, it is essential that peace and security concerns be woven into every aspect of the strategy. The prevailing orthodoxy does not recognise well enough that it is often the inequity in the socio-economic and political system, and people's low expectations of that system, that prevent aid from achieving its goals. Nor does the orthodoxy properly account for or respond to the difficult truth that aid, like diamonds, often becomes a resource worth competing or fighting for. Likewise, trade and other policies can have ripple effects that exacerbate existing tensions in and between countries. The EU has the responsibility to adequately assess the impact of **all** its policies and its aid on existing or latent conflicts.

Conflict sensitivity ultimately refers to the importance of the context in which one operates, and particularly of understanding the roots causes of conflict and fragility and addressing them when implementing the project. Many different methods can be used in determining the impact of projects on peace and conflict context. Choosing a methodology is influenced by the framework used by the implementing agency or donor, the amount of time available and the particular aims of the impact study. The EU has already developed interesting and relevant tools such as the "EC Checklist on Root Causes of Conflicts," and a few Member States have also developed their own conflict assessment tools. All implementing tools and actions plans should refer to the importance of doing regular and thorough conflict assessment studies before engaging on or funding any project or policies.

Similarly, in view of the importance of trade and foreign investment in Africa and a growing emphasis on privatization, there is much need to hold companies accountable for their practices. The EU and its Member States should develop binding mechanisms for ensuring that European private companies adhere to the principles and values espoused by the EU with regard to human rights and conflict prevention. Given the correlation between the exploitation of natural resources and violent conflict on the African continent, it is particularly important that the Strategy considers these linkages. The Strategy should promote international action to address the illicit trade in natural resources as a driver of conflict, including definition of what constitutes *conflict resources*, as well as a commitment to develop multilateral approaches to this issue. Likewise, the Strategy should commit European lending institutions, such as the European Investment Bank, to take conflict implications into account in their lending practices and loan assessments.

- **Prioritizing of civil society and local engagement at all stages of policy development, implementation, and evaluation.**

Processes of information-sharing, consultation and participation should be central to the EU-Africa Joint Strategy. Significant attention should be paid to engaging local civil society organisations in formulating and implementing crisis management as well as peacebuilding strategies. Civil society encompasses a broad-range of actors and is much broader than NGOs; it involves movements, trade unions, employers, market associations, interest based alliances and traditional African structures. It is important to define to whom you want to talk since representativeness is not any easier in most African countries than it is in Europe. Framing consultative approaches through a peacebuilding lens promotes open, diverse and genuine processes; it also supports inclusion and participation and ensures that people feel that their interests are reflected in the outcomes. This in itself enhances the ownership and sustainability of the processes themselves.

Rather than seeking a pan-African civil society response at the outset, it is important to encourage African governments at the highest political levels to create actual political

space for civil society: too few governments welcome scrutiny or encourage the growth of structures for public discourse that can hold governments to account. In fact, more often the space for civil society is frequently severely curtailed. Space can be limited either 'directly' through oppression and abuses of power, or 'indirectly' by new regulations on accreditation or taxation. Appropriate funding and guarantees for political independence are necessary to create the political space for genuine and effective dialogue. Furthermore, there must be mechanisms through which civil society and non-state actors can provide input to governmental decision-making processes.

In some countries, civil society is unprepared for the role that it is expected to play in a democratic society and hence a substantial investment needs to be made to diversify civil society organizations (traditional and non-traditional), to improve their effectiveness and sustainability and to develop their own mandates. Where appropriate, European civil society should be enabled (through appropriate funding) to assist in this process.

It is essential that the goals, challenges and expected gains of the Strategy are communicated to a wider public, both in Africa and in Europe. If this Strategy is intended to bring about significant reforms both in the way the EU and Africa relate and in terms of governance, people have to understand the reforms in order to own them. The communications strategy underpinning this Strategy must be developed right from the start. Moreover, the communication strategy should be a mechanism that also provides a feedback loop to ensure that government is linked into the needs of their constituents on these policies.

- **Coherent and effective use of available all EU tools.**

As we advocate for support of a comprehensive view of peacebuilding at the African level, it is vital that the same view be taken at the EU level. The EU has a variety of tools for effective peacebuilding, including many forms of development assistance and the CFSP/ESDP. It is essential that these instruments work in harmony.

- **Upholding of all previous commitments and policies; incorporation of all other relevant policies being drafted concurrently.**

The EU has made many important commitments and declarations regarding aspects of peace and security, notably the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts adopted by the General Affairs Council in June 2001 and endorsed by the European Council at Göteborg, as well as work on small arms and light weapons reduction, children affected by armed conflict, and policy coherence in development. Explicit reference to these prior commitments will contribute to policy coherence and consistency at the EU level. The Strategy should also recognise and harmonise with the many other policies and strategies currently in development, including the "fragile situations" discussions, Economic Partnership Agreements, and the drafting of the 10<sup>th</sup> Economic Development Fund (EDF) including extension of the African Peace Facility.

- **Inclusion of a joint evaluation process.**

A timetable for periodic evaluation should be agreed during which both institutions critically examine the impact of the Strategy with mechanisms for revision if necessary. We encourage the establishment of specific benchmarks to make the process of monitoring and evaluation possible. It is important that any review process include the active engagement of civil society by making information and resources readily available to them. In addition to sectoral reports, which should include cross-cutting issues like peacebuilding and gender, it is necessary to have inclusive consultation with civil society, taking into consideration the capacity building that must take place to enable this.

- **Clarity of the Strategy's financing.**

At this stage, the financing of the commitments within the Strategy is unclear. The discussion and decision-making process with regard to the financial instruments for

external action has closed and the Financial Perspectives for 2007 to 2013 have been set. The discussions around the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF are well advanced.

At the request of the Council, reference to conflict prevention has been removed from all the financial instruments for external action (with the exception of the Instrument for Stability). This limits the EU's ability to implement any peace and security aspect of this Strategy from within those instruments.

There is also a wide range of activities included in the Strategy which would more appropriately come from outside of a development envelope. Development funds should be used for development activities only and other sources of funding should be found for activities, such as military support, trade, and energy.

As the first major initiative to be negotiated jointly between the EU and AU, the Strategy has historic significance and potential to be a watershed in Europe-Africa relations. This potential hinges on the ability of the Strategy to be implemented effectively, which requires, among other things, adequate and appropriate resources. If the peacebuilding agenda of the Strategy is left behind because of the lack of appropriate finance, it would be a tragic missed opportunity for the governments involved, and more importantly, the people of both continents.