

Addressing inequalities and building sustainable economies through Africa-EU cooperation: an open exchange of views between partners

16 March 2021, 14:00 - 16:30 CET

You are invited to register for the event via the following [link](#)

Background

EU-Africa relations at a crossroads...

Africa and Europe have long standing historical and political ties, making them strategic partners to build alliances to promote common interests and tackle issues. That being said, while Africa is of growing importance to the EU, the EU itself is not Africa's only partner. Many new players approach the continent driven by its potential. The recent economic growth registered in many African countries has further attracted global attention, forcing the EU (institutions and Member States) to review their geopolitical relations: interests have shifted between the two continents and should move on from the donor-beneficiary approach, overcoming a still quite prominent neo-colonial perspective.

Furthermore, the promising economic growth trends in Africa should not overshadow the need to equally distribute such wealth, and to promote human development and wellbeing for all within the carrying capacity of our planet. Indeed, inequalities continue to plague the majority of African countries, not only in terms of economic divide but also concerning access to political decision-making, education and health services, and means to adapt to climate change consequences. With this in mind, the EU-Africa ties cannot be merely reduced to increasing business and investment interests. The relation between the EU and Africa needs to include reflections and strategies on how to implement economic and social strategies in a coherent way, become more balanced, and be premised on equal participation and representation.

Inequalities at an all time high due to COVID-19, sustainable economic systems urgently called for

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated such inequalities and exposed the unsustainability of "business as usual" socio-economic models. While the COVID-19 virus can affect everyone, marginalised and excluded people are disproportionately affected. Women, young people and persons with disabilities are among the groups directly and indirectly affected by COVID-19 in Africa. There is an urgent need for improved partnerships to promote effective multilateral cooperation and a systemic, multidimensional approach. The EU and its Member States will have to play an active role in defining and implementing such enhanced international cooperation strategies and innovative partnerships, in the framework of policy coherence for sustainable development.

Restructuring and innovating EU-Africa partnerships

In light of the events planned for 2021 on EU-Africa relations (EU-Africa Summit, EU-Africa Business Forum, the Africa's Green Future conference, and EU-Africa civil society week) a discussion and exchange of ideas webinar will take place during CONCORD's Inequality and Sustainable Economy

(ISE) workstream meeting on March 16th. The event follows the work that has been done within CONCORD to raise awareness on these important issues and to promote innovative partnership to tackle them, with a view of further extending the discussion to its African partners.

Supporting the transition towards more sustainable economies and tackling inequalities are two of the political priorities of the Von der Leyen Commission, reflecting the commitments set out in the 2017 European Consensus on Development. However, the publication of the European Commission's 2020 "Comprehensive Strategy with Africa" has left some doubts concerning said commitments and political agenda. Indeed, the document stresses the need to partner with Africa to address these issues by focusing on private capital and foreign investments, by promoting the adoption of laissez-faire policies and regulatory reforms that improve the business environment and investment climate.

The mentions of human development, and specifically on enhancing learning, knowledge and skills, research and innovation capacities, is a welcome one. Nonetheless, this should not be seen only as a tool to enable a productive workforce, but as means to promote the self-realisation of every individual and build more sustainable economies. Furthermore, the link between these propositions and an analysis of the most severe drivers of inequalities in Africa is missing. For example, the document would benefit from addressing specific issues like land grabbing and the promotion of food production models based on large-scale monoculture and corporation-led supply chains. These industrial systems severely hit small-scale family farmers, who make up an important share of the continent's population and rely on agroecological family farming models and territorial markets, ultimately exacerbating systemic poverty and food insecurity. The gaps on inequalities and sustainable economy in the Commission's document indicate that much work is still to be done to push these topics on the Summit's agenda.

Rationale and objective

Following the discussion on international partnership that took place during CONCORD's 2020 General Assembly, there is a renewed commitment to create a network of equal partners and foster more frequent exchanges. This entails further involvement in CONCORD's work right from the start, with positive impact on its policy and advocacy work. The purpose of the event is therefore to foster discussions and exchanges of ideas on how to further promote ISE issues on the EU's agenda for its partnership with Africa. CONCORD put forward its views of addressing inequalities and building a sustainable economy across our continents, but do partners agree and can we build synergies?

The main objectives of the meeting will be to: encourage further discussions on ISE, increase CONCORD's understanding of its partners' perspectives on inequality and sustainable economy issues, and improve CONCORD's advocacy impact through increased consulting and cooperation with members and partners.

Partners

Opening panel:

- Paul Okumu (Africa Platform)
- Salina Sanou, (Head of Programmes, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance)
- Luísa Fondello (representing CONCORD Europe)

Break-out session on Inequalities:

- Joel Odigie Akator (ITUC-Africa)
- Dr Hibist Kassa (Institute for African Alternatives)

Break-out session on Sustainable Economy:

- Wangeci Gitata-Kiriga (Senior Advisor on Sustainable Trade Systems)
- Rostaing Sessi/Imelda Agondanou (ROPPE)

Format

The sessions will be participatory and consist of a plenary and break-out group parts. The sessions will take place from 14:00 until 16:30 CET.

Please note that the discussions will take place entirely in English, with no possibility for translation.

When	What	How	Who
14:00-14:15	Welcome and introductions	2' delay, 5' check-in and 3' presenting agenda for the afternoon	Visuality
14:15-14:55	Opening panel to set the stage	30' presentations on how to address inequalities and build sustainable economies through EU-Africa cooperation + 10' Q&A	
14:55-15:10	Pitches for break-out topics	15', three minute pitches by the 4 partners on the main topics to discuss during the break-out sessions	
15:10-15:20	Coffee break	10'	
15:20-16:05	Break-out groups	45' in 4 break-out groups, each discussing either inequalities or sustainable economy with partners, to discuss the following guiding questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are the most urgent actions that need to be taken to address inequalities/build a sustainable economy? 2) Can we enhance synergies across our continents to make the change happen? 3) How can CONCORD and its network improve their advocacy work and push ISE issues on the EU's agenda? 	Moderation by CONCORD members
16:05-16:30	Feedback to plenary	20' feedback from the groups, with each group presenting in 5' one example from what they shared in their discussions and/or commitments regarding what they want to change + 5' closing remarks	

Resources



[CONCORD's Analysis of EU Communication "Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa"](#)

[EC Communication "Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa"](#)

[Inequalities unwrapped: an urgent call for systemic change](#)

[Responding to COVID-19: Forging a path to an equitable future](#)

[Mind Our Business: Amplify the transformative power of sustainable and inclusive business models through EU external action](#)

