

# MIGRATION: IN IT FOR THE LONG RUN?

Africa – EU Policy Dialogue Platform Series

14 September 2016



This is the report of the 1<sup>st</sup> dialogue of the **Africa-EU Policy Dialogue Plat-form Series** by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and CCPAU held in September 2016. This report provides a summary of key outcomes and recommendations from the discussions. It does not represent the views of the co-hosting organisations.

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## I. Introduction

Migration has become an issue of increasing concern in world politics and public debates. In Europe and Africa, migration has become one of the most frequently discussed and controversial topics with images of flimsy boats and drowning migrants in the news. While the EU is still trying to come to terms with how to tackle a pattern of sharply increased migration, Africa is discussing how to stem irregular migration and its dangers. These discussions have created a new dynamic in the Africa–EU partnership on migration. The Valletta summit, organised in November 2015, is the most visible sign of this. However, even if there is new political interest and momentum, which manifests itself in the Valletta Action Plan, there are still many areas in which the two partners hold significantly different views. This pertains to the more technical issues, such as the joint implementation of the action plan, but also to political and fundamental issues on what the priorities are for each partner, and how to adequately address migration and through what channels. Timing is also a big challenge. European governments are not only under immense pressure from voters to produce results, but the next Africa–EU summit is coming up in 2017. These conditions could jeopardise the successful implementation of the action plan and the longer-term political dialogue.

In an effort to contribute towards a more beneficial political dialogue between the two continents the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and CCPAU co-hosted a seminar in Addis Ababa on 14 September

2016, which brought together relevant representatives from the African Union (AU), the EU Delegation to the AU and to Ethiopia, European and African states, UN organisations, experts, academia and civil society organisations, to discuss this topic in an informal and constructive manner.

This report provides a summary of key outcomes and recommendations from the discussions. It does not represent the views of the co-hosting organisations.

## II. Summary of discussions

### The challenge of managing migration

It was generally agreed that the two continents have different priorities with regard to migration management. While Africa's interest is managing intra-African migration, forced displacement and irregular migration, Europe is more interested in controlling immigration. Participants highlighted that for the dialogue to be beneficial there needs to be mutual understanding of each other's priorities, particularly with regard to the management of migration, as well as incorporation of the views and experiences of citizens across Africa and Europe.

The one point of convergence of views between Europe and Africa was the necessity of improving the management of migration in Africa. This ties in with

European interests and, as an official from a European member state said, is one of the reasons why the EU, along with some EU member states, were supporting African countries in their management of migration. Reference was made here to the “Better Migration Management” programme (BMM) that is tackling the trafficking of human beings and the smuggling of migrants within and from the Horn of Africa. While participants generally agreed that irregular migration needed to be further addressed, criticism was also levelled at Europe for being unwilling to establish legal channels for migration as a measure that could alleviate migratory pressure. In addition, it was highlighted that while irregular migration must be dealt with, there was also a need to safe-guard international protection and asylum. The conference also analysed the European perspective on the Africa–Europe Migration issue, noting that the “yes” vote in the UK advisory referendum on leaving the EU (“Brexit”) followed a campaign based partly on fearmongering with regard to the perceived negative effects of migration.

It was recognised that the bulk of African migrants remain on the continent and that African countries were already having to cope with them in very large numbers. A significant issue with regard to migration management concerns the wider governance challenges experienced in many African countries. It was repeatedly mentioned that in order to manage migration better, countries needed to address the root causes, such as governance problems, corruption, climate change, violence and people’s quest for economic and social security.

One participant, using the example of Somalia, argued that even when African states are willing to cooperate, many fail to implement the relevant decisions and agreements, primarily due to prevalent governance challenges. The discrepancy between *de jure* and *de facto* authorities posed such challenges in the example of Somalia. Agreements made by one were challenged and violated by the other in pursuit of control and supremacy, and consequently there was neither coordination, transparency nor accountability. It was further stressed that, even where frameworks existed, they are mostly applied top-down, without involving and addressing people on the ground.

Also discussed was the issue of the existing systems for managing migration within Africa, such as those set up to respond to displacement. The current practice consisted mainly of housing refugees and internally displaced persons in camps, which heightened the challenges with migration governance. According to one participant, the average migrant in the Horn of Africa is 27 years old and male and is often looking for economic opportunities. With the current system of assistance, there was no chance of integrating people into the economy and hence also benefiting from them. Furthermore, this created new challenges as refugees housed in these camps were not productive, lacked an overall purpose and thus were more prone to irregular activities.

## Valletta – a step forward?

Participants were divided over the question of whether the Valletta Summit was really a step forward in terms of more strategic political dialogue between Africa and Europe. It was generally acknowledged that the Valletta Summit brought a new dynamic into the partnership and offered a chance for enhanced cooperation and project implementation. However, participants also raised a number of concerns:

- One participant stressed that Valletta was more of a monologue than a dialogue. Europe not only organised the summit alone, but also dominated the agenda, mainly pushing its own interests. This tied in with the view of another participant, who said that Valletta was concerned only with the northward drift and did not take intra-African migration routes into account.
- Among the questions raised were whether calling for another summit was the right reaction to the migration issue given that there had hardly been any implementation of the agreements made by both sides during the EU–Africa Summit in April 2014. Most prominent in the discussion was the connection made between the various processes set in motion and whether they had succeeded one another, with the earlier ones giving way to Valletta; or whether they were all still in effect and running concurrently. There is the Rabat process, launched in 2006; the Africa–EU Partnership’s Migration, Mobility and Employment (MME), now being referred to as the Migration and Mobility Dialogue (MMD), launched in 2007; and the Khartoum process, that came into being in 2014. Part of the criticism in this regard was that the Valletta process favoured the differential African regional processes rather than the unified continental response, as indicated by the fact that only selected states were invited to the Summit, and the fact that no progress had been made in the MMD process since February 2014.
- Furthermore, the Summit was criticised for not being a platform for discussion on equal terms between the European Union and the African Union, especially since not all member states of the African Union were invited, and so the AU was not represented as one strong entity, with one voice.
- Contrary to the current European narrative of the migration crisis, one participant argued that Valletta was, instead, a symbol of a policy-making crisis in Europe, demonstrating how decision-making had reverted completely back to the national level, with the EU being squeezed out. As an example, the EU–Turkey deal was mentioned, which was more of a German–Turkish deal than anything else.
- Valletta was seen as an emergency measure that was put in place to produce quick results in order to reduce the number of migrants and refugees by blocking their access through the externalisation of border management.

In this context, participants criticised the amount of pressure that the EU member states had put on the EU in order to see quick results on migration-related challenges. The majority of the participants pointed out that there were no quick fixes and that addressing migration needed time and more political dialogue that takes into account the perspectives and priorities of both partners. One participant stressed that the Valletta Summit had to be seen as an evolving EU strategy on migration, meant for European constituencies, rather than as a joint strategy between Africa and Europe. Hence, one could not talk about it as a long-term approach.

- The debate in Valletta was also criticised for not addressing structural deficits properly, such as the lack of migration governance or the lack of good governance in general, especially as these issues were among the root causes of migration.
- Even though there was a provision for student exchanges in the action plan of the Valletta summit, there was still no real progress on legal channels of migration. One participant added that it would be necessary to make progress here in order to address Europe's real crisis, the demographic challenge.

## The Action Plan and EU Trust Fund

Participants were as divided over the EU Trust Fund as they were over the Action Plan (these were the two main outcomes of the Valletta Summit). Some participants argued that the Trust Fund formed the basis for greater cooperation and addressed the needs of the respective countries, which would receive support through it. This includes, among other things, projects to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities, contribute to sustainable development and enhance the protection of refugees. It was acknowledged, however, that the distinctive domestic challenges in the different countries, as well as the difficulties of political dialogue among the respective stakeholders were a hindrance. It was counter-argued that the latter was going to be addressed within the following months and would produce positive results regarding the implementation of the action plan.

Other participants saw the action plan and its implementation as most critical to the success of Valletta's goals. One of the criticisms was that no joint preparation of the projects was envisaged to be undertaken with the EU Trust Fund, and in particular, that voices from on the ground or from local communities were missing. Consequently, the action plan did not reflect the root causes or irregular migration and was not properly grounded in the reality of what was going on in the respective countries or regions. Another criticism was that the implementation was led by European organisations and agencies, some of which had never



worked on migration, and hence had no experience in implementing such projects. In addition to this, some participants mentioned that the action plan was too ambitious and did not give the organisations involved enough time for implementation. Moreover, the amount of €1.8 billion was thought to be too low to resolve all pertinent issues in comparison with the €3 billion the EU had promised to Turkey alone. The action plan was further criticised for being too ambitious, pushing for a quick fix to placate European constituencies, rather than engaging in long-term solutions. Consequently, there was doubt whether the envisaged projects would be fully implemented in the run-up to the next EU–Africa summit in 2017.

One representative of civil society commented that the introduction of new mechanisms to fund migration-related projects, such as the EU Trust Fund, would make it much harder to disentangle where the money would go and for what. This was especially important as the EU was working with states with poor human rights, transparency and accountability records.

## The aftermath of Valletta

The so-called “compacts” featured prominently during the conference. The EU introduced them some seven months after the Valletta summit through the “New Migration Partnership Framework” which had been developed. According to the EU, these compacts

are tailor-made agreements with African countries that are supposed to broaden the existing cooperation by not only addressing migration but also related challenges. So far, the EU has chosen five African countries – Mali, Senegal, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Niger – and is negotiating compacts with them. Unfortunately, the EU officials present could not disclose details on some of the areas that the compacts were supposed to be addressing in the above mentioned countries, as they were still under negotiation.

Many participants were sceptical about the compacts. Not only did the EU introduce them after Valletta, but African officials also wondered whether the EU was trying to reintroduce conditionalities – something the African partners had successfully opposed during Valletta. EU officials responded to participants by stressing that the compacts were in line with the five areas discussed in Valletta and hence part of it.

Furthermore, participants raised the issue of whether the “New Migration Partnership Framework” would introduce a “carrot and stick” approach, reducing development aid or taking other measures, if African states were not willing to cooperate. The new framework appeared explicit on this, stating:

*[a] mix of positive and negative incentives will be integrated into the EU’s development and trade policies to reward those countries willing to cooperate effectively with the EU on migration management and ensure there are consequences for those who refuse.*



The majority of the participants rejected such an approach as this would only exacerbate the challenges on the ground and would also undermine the EU's own developmental goals in the respective countries. Eventually, it was determined that such an approach would backfire and create more irregular migration than before. The EU, according to one participant, had already started to divert money from developmental projects to projects geared towards preventing migration, for example in Niger, where money was being taken away from a project on institution-building. This contradicts the EU's official position of tackling the root causes of irregular migration as one of the prime objectives of Valletta. Another participant warned against the New Migration Partnership Framework, saying that there was a risk that the EU's external affairs policy would be polluted by this approach.

## Bilateral vs multilateral arrangements

The cooperation on migration between Africa and Europe was criticised as oscillating between bilateral and multilateral agreements and lacking consistency. One participant remarked that whenever things did not work on the multilateral level, the EU would start looking for bilateral agreements instead. According to this participant, the multiplicity of agreements and processes overburdened many AU member states as they would have to *“report to too many*

*masters”*. A case in point was that even during the Valletta summit, EU member states held separate meetings with African countries and signed bi-lateral agreements. Consequently, another participant raised the question of why the Valletta Summit was even organised, if EU member states intended to pursue their own separate agreements, and concluded that *“we’re going in a cycle from bilateral to multilateral to bilateral”*.

However, it was also acknowledged that only the bilateral agreements were actually working in terms of project implementation on the ground, as they were more focused on the particular situation in the respective country. They should, however, be better coordinated and embedded in multilateral frameworks that could act as guides. The latter should be jointly designed and agreed upon by the European and African states as equals, in which the AU comes in with one voice representing all its Member States.

## Civic participation in policy formulation

The meeting observed that the CSOs in Europe had not taken the lead in ensuring that the funding earmarked for migration went towards tackling the root causes. It was imperative that CSOs, despite the hostile environment caused by the increase of migrants, push for policies that not only involve the citizens of both continents, but are also accountable. CSOs could also play their role by ensuring that extremist positions such as anti-migration

policies, were being addressed by genuine citizen participation in the discourse with AU and EU institutions and Member States. Besides the CSOs, the media was also thought to play a negative role by promoting the irregular and negative aspects of migration at the expense of the positive aspects.

### III: Conclusions and recommendations on the future of Africa–EU migration

A number of conclusions and recommendations emerged during the seminar discussions, including:

#### On dialogue, mutual understanding and future cooperation

1. The Dialogue between the EU and the AU needs to be reinvigorated and has to be on equal terms. It is mandatory that such dialogue include the respective Member States, as well as the RECs. Bilateral or sub-regional discussions between African and European stakeholders have to be based on intercontinental frameworks and should reinforce and/or be complementary to each other.
2. There has to be mutual understanding of the needs and priorities of each

region, as well as what the views and perceptions of their citizenry are. Only through mutual understanding could there be political common ground and genuine efforts to collaborate on migration, address its negative effects, create legal channels for migration, safe-guard refugee protection and realise all the benefits of migration for both continents.

3. The EU must not put migration at the centre of development cooperation as this risks other important development areas being neglected, inappropriately addressed or generally subordinated to the one issue of migration.
4. Ensuring international protection and asylum to those fleeing persecution should remain a priority over curbing irregular migration. Also, addressing root causes of irregular migration should be prioritised as a long-term solution to managing migration.
5. The action plan came out with a fairly political declaration and may therefore need an additional, second level of technical action planning for its successful implementation.
6. European politicians need to be honest to their constituencies that there will be no quick fixes and that it will take time to establish a well-functioning migration management system that would benefit Africa and Europe. Now would be the time to outline such an approach, given that migration is a top priority for both continents.
7. Future discussions on migration should be pro-active, inclusive and

based on future trends rather than being reactive to crises and the search for quick solutions. People will continue to migrate as they have done for centuries, and so migration is a longterm issue that needs to be addressed as such.

8. Migration management should be considered in a broader context by addressing the root causes of migration. Future plans should aim at en-trenching durable solutions that target systemic failures in order to address the “push” factors. This has to entail frank dialogue that does not shy away from sensitive political issues.

## On changing the migration narrative

9. The focus should be on changing the negative narrative of migration, which is currently primarily about irregular migration. This should shift to include a discourse on the positive aspects of migration, including the economic benefits it has for both the sending and receiving communities. This can be done with the support of civil society organisations and the media. In particular, there should be strategic use of the media to reframe the narratives on migration and also to allow for wider engagement with citizens on the related issues.
10. The beneficial components of migration should be recognised and inculcated into migration policies. Good examples of the benefits of

migration are remittances from the African Diaspora and Europe’s future need of labour migrants.

## On the role of civil society organisations and the media

11. The various processes should recognise the important role of African CSOs and involve them in the intergovernmental dialogues and processes. This should include African CSOs within the mechanisms of the AU, such as ECOSOCC, as well as African CSOs outside this framework.
12. European and African civil society organisations should collaborate to effectively engage both the EU and AU and their member states in both continents.
13. CSOs could also play a significant role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of programmes, and also in monitoring and evaluating the development of national-level compacts.
14. Civil society should also collaborate to secure evidence of the impact that the various EU policies on migration have had. Such evidence would be crucial for engaging governments and institutions, especially in Europe, to promote better and fairer management of migration.

## On funding

15. The issue of resourcing migration interventions needs to be discussed on a broad basis in order to ensure that adequate and durable re-sources remain available to implement the required activities.
16. At the same time, the AU and African countries must not be dependent only on their partners, in this case the EU. They should seek to raise funding from within the continent to fund their developmental efforts and migration interventions, including in relation to freedom of movement.

## About the Africa–EU Policy Dialogue Platform

In 2016 the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and CCPAU joined forces and established a policy dialogue platform to discuss pertinent issues within the Africa–EU partnership. To date, the partnership mainly exists between the AU and EU Commissions. For the partnership to be successful and sustainable in the long run, however, it needs to factor in the interests of European and African member states, as well as the Regional Economic Communities (REC). Furthermore, it is necessary to promote a *people-centred approach*.

If citizens are to accept decisions made by their leaders – African or European – the partnership needs the involvement of non-state actors, such as researchers, civil society and the private sector. The platform meetings co-organised by the FES and CCPAU are intended to promote open and frank exchanges between both continents and will take place in a closed informal setting held under the Chatham House Rule.

Given the complexity of Africa–EU relations and the topics associated with them, the seminars aim at building common ground, coming up with policy recommendations and strengthening networks that can be used to facilitate further cooperation.

## About the organizers:

### CCPAU

CCPAU has established itself as a critical Pan-Africanist initiative that facilitates a deeper engagement on the part of African civil society organisations and citizens with regional and continental policies and programmes. CCPAU's mandate extends to ensuring that the continent has its people at its centre and not governments, and that decision-making is driven by, and accountable and accessible to African citizens. CCPAU is a network of national, regional and continental African civil society organisations and citizens. We utilise invited and claimed spaces to foster substantive and procedural changes within regional and continental mechanisms, and to amplify African citizens' voices. CCPAU participates in a wide range of activities and programmes, including organising the signature Citizens' Continental Conferences, research and production of policy briefs on pertinent continental issues such as freedom of movement in Africa. CCPAU also carries out advocacy, training, campaigns and mobilisation and cross-continental exchanges.

### Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is a private, non-profit organization committed to the values of social democracy. It is the aim of FES to facilitate the political and social education of individuals from all walks of life in the spirit of democracy and pluralism as well as to contribute to international understanding and cooperation. FES carries out its mission in Germany and internationally through its programs of political education, international cooperation, study and research. At present, FES maintains around 100 offices worldwide, of which 19 are in sub-Saharan Africa.