



Report of the ISS Public Seminar: *Challenges of Europe-Africa Relations in 2009: Independent Perspectives from Europe and Africa*
Co-Hosted by the Conflict Prevention Programme (CPP), ISS Addis Ababa and the European Centre for Development Policy Management, March 3, 2009

Background

The joint ECDPM-ISS Seminar is a part of the comprehensive strategy by the ISS to build consensus by providing a platform for sharing information, encouraging policy analysis, constructive debates and dialogues on the continent's agenda. For ECDPM, the seminar is fulfilling its mandate to provide independent analysis to facilitate policy dialogue between Europe and Africa. Overall, the aim is to stimulate quality discussion and constructive interaction between participants drawn from the diplomatic community, African Union (AU), civil society organizations and other interested parties.

Summary of the Seminar

The seminar started with welcoming and introductory remark by Mr. Kenneth Mpyisi, Office Director, ISS Addis Ababa. In his speech, Mr. Kenneth underlined the importance and significance of the topic of the seminar and stated that there are significant changes in the state of affairs in the relations between Europe and Africa. He also informed that the seminar will stir constructive debate and will explore some of the policy options for effective implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategic Strategy (JAES). Mr. Mpyisi then thanked the four presenters for their time and welcomed them to make their presentations.

The first presenter, Mr. James Mackie, Program Coordinator, ECDPM made a speech on **“Challenges for Europe-Africa relations-The Impact of Development in Europe.”** Mr. Mackie structured his presentation on six key points: on the EU institutional renewal, EU reform and Lisbon treaty, Presidency priorities of Czech and Swedish, 2010 review of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA), making Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) more balanced and mutual beneficial and the impact of the financial crisis on JAES. In addition, the presenter informed that European parliamentary election will be held in June, 2009 and the new parliamentarians will take office in July, and one of their first tasks will be to hold hearings for the new commissioners. He further pointed that over the past few years, ACP-EU relations have been confronted with diverse external

and internal challenges such as regional integrations, EPA negotiations, the AU's growing presence, the EU's enlargement and increasing diversity as well as other more global challenges like financial crisis.

The second presenter, Mr. Andrew Sherriff, Senior Programme Officer, ECDPM, made his presentation on **“Reflection from Europe on the Implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy.”** Mr. Sherriff in his presentation gave an overview of the JAES and its associated eight partnership areas and Action Plans (2008-2010), which were adopted in Lisbon in December 2007, that are designed to change the nature of relations between Africa and Europe. He also identified the significance of the JAES as a policy framework and its Action Plans offer opportunities for all stakeholders. In conclusion, Andrew identified the main challenges for the JAES and he suggested that at least some progress should be made on such challenges in order to utilize the potential benefits of JAES.

The third presenter, Mr. Roba D. Sharamo, Programme Head, CPP, ISS Addis Ababa, delivered his presentation on the **“Reflections from Africa on the Implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy.”** In his discussion, Mr. Sharamo pointed out that Europe and Africa have long lasting relationship and that since 2000 the relation between Europe and Africa have steadily deepened and broadened. He outlined some of the underlying African perspectives on the JAES—initial perception of lack of African ownership (particularly the original EU Strategy adopted in 2005), problems of failures of past strategies, memories of colonial experiences and the enduring perception that the European countries developed the strategy as they were driven by fog of fear based on the perceived invasion of Africa—traditional territories of Europe by the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China). He then noted the need to work on the broken trust between the Europe and Africa and to collectively overcome the blinding mindsets---paternalistic attitudes by the EU and old reactive donor-recipient tendencies of most African regimes. In conclusion, Mr. Sharamo outlined practical steps to narrow perceptual and operational challenges within the African Union Commission (AUC)--lack of African public awareness of JAES, AUC's poor involvement of Pan-African Parliament, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and capacity building of the AUC and strengthening of the AU Permanent Mission to the EU in Brussels among others to effectively implement the JAES.

The fourth discussant, Ambassador Koen Vervaeke, EU Special Representative to the African Union, discussed major points raised in the previous three presentations and responded to some of the questions raised by the presenters. In his discussions, Ambassador Vervaeke emphasized the importance of institutional integration and elaborated the need to mobilize interest and support from some African member states. He also mentioned that it is critical to have support from the RECs and bring them on board.

After the presentations the floor was opened for interactive discussions and several issues were raised and discussed. Some of the main issues that the discussion centered on were: the need to restore the broken trust, review the effectiveness of multiple policies and relationships between EU and Africa (with reference to CPA), move beyond paternalistic

and reactive donor-driven relationships, create more awareness both in Africa and Europe to strengthen people-people partnerships, involve the AU Member States, RECs and CSOs to effectively implement JAES.

Recommendations

In order to overcome the existing challenges on the Europe – Africa relationship, certain recommendations were advanced:

- Invest in equality of partnerships—the need to restore the broken trust between the Africa and Europe through dialogue and practical actions to anchor Africans’ ownership over the strategic partnership;
- The JAES need to take into consideration the asymmetric competencies that exist between the EU and AU in terms of capacity, resource, institutions and integration processes. The partnership needs to be balanced;
- The AUC should actively involve the Pan-African Parliament, RECs and CSOs as well as the people of Africa at large in the strategic partnership process. The ownership of the strategic partnership needs to extend beyond the Brussels – Addis Ababa axis;
- JAES should have coherence with other policy frameworks. There is a need to marry the bilateral agreements between specific EU Member States and AU Member States to balance competing interests within the overall framework of the JAES;
- Explore possibilities for definitive funding mechanisms to support the implementation of JAES to ensure sound and timely and effective implementation of the strategy; and
- To balance Africa’s partnership with the rest, there is need to explore Africa-EU-China triangular relationships for better harmonized partnerships, broadened relationships and opportunities for continental engagements.