



III Encuentro de
Think Tanks
África-España

Nuevos enfoques
para una relación
UE-África

Document of conclusions and recommendations

The following are the most significant proposals and political recommendations that can contribute not only to Spain's position before the EU-AU 2021 summit, but also to the diagnosis of the challenges facing the African continent, and above all the applicability of Spain's strategy towards Africa, for a shared vision and common priorities with African countries:

- With regard to governance and conflict in Africa, it is emphasised, in relation to the analysis of African contexts in general, that from the margins of academia and public policy, it is not enough just to look at how peace can be achieved in Africa, but also at the variety of diagnoses. **Universal diagnoses that explain the origin of armed conflicts anywhere in Africa must be abandoned. Multidimensional analyses** are also needed, with contributions that intertwine the political, economic and social. It must also be considered that governance is now **multilevel**, and therefore no single actor on the political stage, i.e. African leaders, should be held responsible, but rather that power is permeated by multiple actors of international dimensions, which must be considered when understanding a conflict.
- Along the lines of **diagnostic distortions**, African women are presented as a "whole" and as permanently subjugated and waiting for external assistance in order to be liberated. This is an incomplete perception of the reality of African women and does not reflect the different agendas that women in Africa may have. A question was asked during the meeting about Spain's official visits to African countries, which include meetings with women. The question posed in a reflective tone is: with which women do they meet: with women from the north of Mali or with members of the power structures in the capital?
- It should be borne in mind that Africa is an over-studied continent, where everyone has an opinion/view and there are many external evaluations by international organisations and institutions. For this reason, **African evaluation mechanisms** should be particularly valued in the diagnoses carried out.
- Think tanks can play an important role in national and EU strategies towards Africa. In this way, governments in general (and Spain's in particular) are encouraged to **incorporate the views of civil society**. However, it is emphasised that the participation of civil society is not about "ticking the box"



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of its involvement in the process of analysis and elaboration of strategies, but that it has to be genuinely taken into account. This applies not only to incorporating African "local voices", but also to **reviewing the participation of civil society** in the countries of origin (such as Spain) in the elaboration of their countries' strategies towards Africa.

- With specific reference to the recommendations for the Spanish government, the existence of **Spain's action programme towards Africa is highly valued, but the following is suggested:** (i) dissemination of the programme through the Embassies to make African society aware of it, (ii) clarity in what is to be achieved, (iii) monitoring and evaluation of the policies, not only within Spain, but also abroad, and (iv) that a continuous process of relations with local actors and listening to African visions be established.
- In the economic sphere, it is quite reasonable for Africa to aspire to the economic convergence achieved in other already industrialised parts of the world at a high cost to the planet. For this reason, and for some panellists, Africa must join the process of promoting green industries, but at a different pace. Thus, **although green industrialisation offers interesting alternatives, it must be considered unrealistic and unfair not to also take into account other forms of industrialisation.**
- In this regard, a fundamental idea that the Spanish administration could underline is the **conquest of sovereignty** in that the decisions taken **in terms of sustainability** should be made in accordance with its own interests that favour the African situation, and not because they are part of international policies and relations with third countries (whether China or Europe). To this end, the development of African strategies towards third countries could be supported in general, just as international actors have towards Africa.
- In the context of COVID-19, which has highlighted the vulnerability and dependence of African economies on foreign markets, the shared responsibility of the EU (and therefore of Spain) in the **joint development of regional value chains in Africa**, through the promotion of investment and the creation of value chains for the export of African final products, fostered with the support of Spanish companies as a basis for partnership for shared prosperity, is underlined in this regard.
- From the point of view of international relations, it is necessary to advocate greater multilateralism and a strategy in which the different actors work horizontally and on an equal footing, and to bring them closer to Africa's needs. In relation to this, there is a need to **strengthen the Mediterranean dimension**, especially between Spain and some Mediterranean countries, due



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to the undeniable relationship between the two continents, motivated by geographical reasons of extreme proximity (with North Africa), shared values and common history. All of this should be more than enough reason to relaunch cooperation and social partnerships between Africa and the EU, which are closer than ever and whose geographical proximity is much greater than with the rest of the international actors.

- The rhetoric and declaration of intent for a partnership of equals between Europe and Africa has been pervasive in numerous EU strategies, documents and declarations for several years now, and most recently, in the mandate of the new president of the European Commission. However, there are still incoherencies on both sides that move this relationship away from a genuine partnership of equals. A certain vision persists from Europe of expecting 'loyalty' from African countries in exchange for decades of development aid. On the African side, some elites still seek more European aid, and opposing positions are defended in different fora.
- The Spanish **position can contribute to the transition from the European rhetoric of partnership between equals to practice**, through different actions:
 - The first is to highlight and not ignore the real divergences that exist between the two sides (e.g. on issues such as migration, trade relations, or the effects of the EU Green Deal on African exports).
 - The second is to restore governance issues to the European agenda, possibly neglected due to the growing influence of other international actors who have not paid attention to this aspect, and to look for mutual responsibilities, not only on the African side (e.g. the role of European companies).
 - Thirdly, work towards co-responsibility in the financing of the EU-Africa partnership, and for development aid to be used, among other things, where it is not needed (fiscal strengthening, among others).