



European Security and Defence Assembly Assembly of Western European Union

Press Release No. 37/2010

EU-Africa: an “equal partnership” for development and security

Brussels, 16 September 2010 – In the framework of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union and Western European Union and with the support of the Belgian Federal Parliament, the European Security and Defence Assembly/WEU Assembly held a high-level conference on “**EU-Africa: Partnership for Development and Security**” on 15 and 16 September in the Belgian House of Representatives in Brussels. A large number of national parliamentarians and speakers from European and African countries debated issues relating to development and security with top-level actors from European Union and African Union institutions.

The findings of the conference will provide the basis for a report and accompanying political recommendations to be submitted for approval to the next plenary session of the European Security and Defence Assembly (ESDA) from 30 November to 2 December at the Palais d'Iéna in Paris by **Mr Piero FASSINO** (Italy, Socialist Group), Chairman and Rapporteur of the Assembly's Political Committee.

Opening the high-level conference, **Mr André FLAHAUT**, Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives, called for a genuinely “equal partnership” between the EU and Africa, both at government level and between individuals and local communities. **Mr Danny PIETERS**, Speaker of the Belgian Senate, underlined that the discussions held at this conference would lay the groundwork for the third Africa-EU summit, to take place in Libya on 29 and 30 November next. **Mr Robert WALTER MP**, President of the ESDA/WEU Assembly, said that he hoped this initiative of the ESDA, in cooperation with the Belgian EU/WEU Presidency, would strengthen the EU-Africa partnership for development and security, in particular through the deployment of European and African troops “side by side”.

Mr Jean PING, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), said that the AU now had a key body in the Peace and Security Council (PSC) which played an active role in conflict prevention, management and settlement, as well as in creating the conditions for post-conflict reconstruction and development. The AU was the keystone of the continent's peace and security architecture and Africa could justly be proud of it. Mr PING also laid emphasis on Africa's economic appeal and wondered “why does Europe not invest more in Africa?” China has an economic presence in Africa, but no more so than it does in Europe.

Mr Aminu WAZIRI TAMBUNWAL, speaking on behalf of **Mr Dimeji Sabur BANKOLE**, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nigeria, explained “democracy has opened new opportunities in Africa, to promote spiritual, mental and material development of the human person. And it is gratifying to observe that African Parliaments are leveraging on these democratic opportunities to enhance the overall conditions of our people through legislative frameworks that promote development, security and stability”.

Mr Charles MICHEL, Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation, recalled the privileged nature of the “long-lasting and multifarious” relationship between Europe and Africa. The destiny of the continents was “undoubtedly linked”. The appearance of “new actors” on the stage did not take away from that fact. “Europe will share the fruits of Africa's progress or will suffer the negative consequences of its decline. It is these common interests that should guide our actions” he declared.

The first session on “Africa-EU Strategic Partnership on development – state of play and perspectives on the future” was chaired by **Mr Herman DE CROO**, Minister of State, member of the Advisory Committee on European Affairs, former Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives.

Mr Peter KATJAVIVI MP, National Assembly of Namibia, stressed the fundamental interdependence between the three main pillars of “human rights, democracy and development”.

Mr Charles GOERENS, Member of the European Parliament and former President of the Assembly, felt that the rise in intra-national conflicts in Africa was linked to governance problems. Furthermore, Africa was not suitably represented at the level of global governance. In particular, Africa should be given two seats on the United Nations Security Council. Africa was also under-represented in the G20 in which South Africa was the only African country to date. As regards the economic development of the African continent, Mr GOERENS advised Africans, who had a considerable number of resources, to rely increasingly on the production of manufactured products “on the spot” in order to boost economic growth.

Mr Fred KAPONDI MP, National Assembly of Kenya, particularly deplored the act of “dumping” “subsidised” agricultural produce from Europe. He asked the EU to make an effort to “restore the balance of trade”. Regarding security problems, he cited the example of Somalia where the situation was getting worse by the day, which was having a major detrimental impact on global security.

Mr Manuel LOPEZ BLANCO, European Commission, DG development, welcomed Africa’s prospects for economic growth and the fact that it was more “resilient” to the economic crisis than other countries around the world. He nevertheless pointed out that a number of African countries should strengthen their governance and the fight against corruption. The EU supported Africa’s economic development efforts and its attempts to diversify and create businesses.

Bishop Louis PORTELLA-MBUYU, Congo-Brazzaville, stressed the importance of development for Africa to achieve the much-talked-about “Millennium Goals”. In particular he called for “greater fiscal and social responsibility on the part of African leaders”. It was necessary, for example, to continue striving for greater transparency in the mining industry. Transparency was a basic and urgent step. At international level, it was important to help civil society fully assume its responsibilities.

Mr Jean-Philippe STIJNS, OECD Development Centre, noted that the African continent had grown “at 2.5% in 2009 and is expected to rebound by 4.5% in 2010 and by 5.2% in 2011”. During the global crisis, certain factors of resilience demonstrated new strengths within Africa. “There have been improvements in macro policies with inflation coming under control and improved fiscal balance supported by debt relief... If the continent was a single country, it would already be pretty much free from aid (development assistance)... In nearly one third of African countries, aid already represents less than 10% of taxes. That is very good news”. But there were still challenges ahead, in particular “the increasing specialisation of African countries in terms of the range of the products they export”.

Mr Damien HELLY, EU Institute of Security Studies, underlined the extreme diversity of Africa. He also noted that EU member states still kept control of their relationships with African countries. At a multilateral level, the differences in “potential” between African countries had to be taken into account, which was a matter of compromise and time. “Let’s put differentiation, transparency and leadership back at the centre of Africa-Europe relations”, he proposed. It was not possible to ignore illegal trafficking in raw materials and weapons. He insisted that transparency would allow the “void of illegality” to be replaced by “shared responsibility”. In his view, “without leaders who are open to the forces of change within civil society, it is impossible to achieve results”.