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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation

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(presented by the Commission)

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1. INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of the 21st century the new geopolitics present challenges and opportunities for all players. Nowhere is this truer than in Africa which is entering a new era. Africa is emerging, more democratic, more vibrant, and positioning herself better to benefit from the opportunities of globalisation.

The birth of the African Union (AU), the reinforced role of Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African blueprints for economic development (NEPAD - New Partnership for Africa's Development) and for democratic governance (the African Peer Review Mechanism) together with the Strategic Plan of the African Union (2004-2007) marked a fundamental break in the way Africa looks at itself and how it engages with its external partners. Africa is now determined to assert its international status and is becoming active on major global issues like food security, energy and climate change and changing economic environments.

Africa has created a network of partnerships which imply taking more responsibility for its own development, looking for African solutions to African problems. At the same time there is a renewed interest in the African continent because of its strategic significance in economic, security and political terms. This provides a genuine and welcome opportunity for Africa's development and its fight against poverty.

The European Union and China are both long-standing partners of African countries. The EU and China are respectively the first and the third commercial partners of, and investors in, Africa. They have in recent years responded to Africa's transformation with major strategy reviews.

Africa and the EU have established a new and comprehensive partnership agreed at the second Africa-EU summit in Lisbon in December 2007¹. The Africa-EU Joint Strategy and its first Action Plan agreed in Lisbon, identify common challenges, common interests and concrete sector-based partnerships with the aim to eradicate poverty, reach the Millennium Development Goals and promote security, human rights, democratic governance, sustainable development, regional integration and integration into the world economy. In line with these objectives and principles, the EU, collectively the largest provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA), has agreed to scale up its aid, in particular to Africa, and to make it more efficient² and has undertaken to align its Africa policy on AU priorities ("ownership"). Untied grants and soft loans are the main financial tools.

China has since the 1990s re-emerged as a global power and has engaged further with Africa. Since 2000 China-Africa trade has steeply increased, Chinese investments in Africa have risen sharply and China has been offering increased development cooperation to African countries. This includes its domestic experience with poverty reduction. The new approach to Africa was laid out in 2006 when China presented a White Paper on its Africa policy focusing

¹ For more information: http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/Conferences/2007/December/eu-au/AU_EU.htm

² In its Communication "EU as a global partner for development", the Commission proposes a number of actions to encourage Member States to increase the volume and the effectiveness of aid as well as areas where EU policies could be better coordinated.

on the promotion of peace and stability, development and common prosperity³. China's official development policy is to pursue cooperation with the focus on sovereignty, solidarity, peace and development with non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit as key principles. Trade, investment, turn-key infrastructure projects and training in China (fellowships) are the main tools supported mainly through loans and in-kind operations⁴.

At the Beijing summit in November 2006, China and Africa sealed a new strategic partnership within the framework provided by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC⁵). Many observers of this process noted a number of shared objectives and interests in promoting Africa's economic growth and integration into the world economy, the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and efforts to conflict management and peacekeeping.

Moreover, both the EU and China have a strong shared interest in promoting stable and sustainable development in Africa. This reality has been recognised by the EU and China: At the tenth China-EU Summit held in Beijing on 28 November 2007, the EU and Chinese leaders 'welcomed more practical cooperation by the two sides through their respective existing cooperation mechanisms with Africa so as to contribute to Africa's peace, stability and sustainable development on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. The two sides agreed to continue their dialogue on African issues, and actively explore effective ways and channels of cooperation among China, the EU and Africa in appropriate areas'.

The Join Africa-EU Strategy explicitly welcomes contributions by other partners and is open to cooperation with third countries on the common objectives of the partnership. These statements therefore provide an explicit opportunity to strategically link and mutually strengthen the EU's partnerships with both Africa and China.

The question is whether more can be done between the EU, Africa and China to reinforce their policy dialogue and cooperation through forms of trilateral cooperation⁶ which complement the bilateral partnerships⁷. This Communication argues that we should begin on the basis of consensus to establish, in a gradual, but progressive way, a cooperative three way agenda with both our African and Chinese partners in a number of areas where synergies and mutual benefits can be maximised.

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (2006) 'China's African Policy', January 2006.

⁴ The exact amounts are difficult to determine, since the accounting methods are very different and China does not publish aid statistics yet. Besides the central government's programmes there are a large number of provincial and corporate actors that are weaving an increasingly dense and complex web of relations with Africa.

⁵ The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was inaugurated through a ministerial conference in Beijing in 2000. The third FOCAC was held at summit level in Beijing 3-5 November 2006. Details: <http://english.focacsummit.org/>

⁶ In line with paragraph 19b of the Accra Agenda for Action which encourages triangular cooperation.

⁷ The more general impacts of China's rise were addressed in the 2006 Communication EU-China: Closer Partners, growing responsibilities. The present Communication focuses specifically on the EU response to the development opportunities and challenges arising in Africa due to China's emergence as a key development partner of Africa..

2. THE EU POLICY INITIATIVE ON TRILATERAL COOPERATION

The Commission proposes that Africa, China and the EU should work together in a flexible and pragmatic way to identify and address a specific number of areas that are suitable for trilateral cooperation and to link this cooperation where possible with existing commitments in multilateral fora and in particular the UN. A step-by-step approach should be taken.

2.1. Guiding principles for trilateral cooperation

- **Pragmatic and progressive approach:** Practical cooperation on the ground. This could focus on concrete projects and sectors. Such a result oriented strategy will help in formulating common objectives.
- **Shared approach:** practical cooperation will be conducted in full association and agreement at each stage with interested African partners (at country, or regional level).
- **Effective aid:** the proposed approach aims at (a) avoiding duplication of efforts; (b) ensuring closer coordination of the EU's and China's activities at country level around African countries' development strategies and facilitating the exchange of experience, including China's own development experience, and best practices and (c) contributing to improved aid effectiveness and to exchange of experiences including on the roles of ODA and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and other means.

The trilateral co-operation will contribute to enhancing our shared responsibility for global governance and development.

2.2. Concrete objectives of trilateral cooperation

It is proposed to focus the trilateral cooperation - in an initial phase - on the following sectors, which are key for Africa's stability and development and where the added value of trilateral cooperation is expected to be the greatest.

- (1) **Peace and security in Africa:** These are prerequisites for development. Therefore it is in the interest of Africa, the EU and China to cooperate in order to promote stability and prosperity in African countries and economies and to work with the AU and in the United Nations (UN) with China to strengthen the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture and assist with AU peace-keeping operations, capacity building and training.
- (2) **Support for African infrastructure:** Infrastructure is the backbone of development, trade and investment: developing common strategies and improving synergies between Africa, the EU and China will help meet enormous Africa's infrastructure needs and common objectives; to promote trilateral cooperation for the delivery of affordable and sustainable infrastructure in Africa, enhancing interconnectivity and regional integration and improving the conditions for sustainable development and economic growth (multimodal transport corridors, telecommunications, energy including renewables, sector approaches). The Infrastructure Consortium for Africa should be a focal point where Africa, the EU and China together with other countries and international organisations coordinate activities and exchange experiences. Coordination on the priorities articulated by Africa (Short Term Action Plan – STAP and the NEPAD Infrastructure Project

Preparation Facility — NEPAD-IPPF, 2003) could also be enhanced within the framework provided by the EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructure.

- (3) **Sustainable management of the environment and natural resources** is key to sustained growth, combating climate change and to mutual trade interests. Trilateral cooperation linked to initiatives such as Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Forest Law Enforcement, Government and Trade (FLEGT), the Kimberley process, could allow African countries to enhance local capacity to manage resources, trade and competition in an open and transparent manner in order to maximise sustainable investment and development outcomes notably in sectors such as forestry, renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste management, fisheries and mining. Given the importance of building long-term national adaptive capacity particularly in the countries most vulnerable to climate change, the Commission proposes to explore the possibility of initiating joint work with the African Union Commission (AUC) and China, for capacity building purposes, on climate change and renewable energy, possibly including technology transfer and increased capacity for Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) investment, also under a post-2012 global climate change agreement. A strong environmental pillar contributes to ensure the livelihood of the poorest and to sustainable peace. Joint capacity building will be consistent with the existing bilateral environmental dialogues between the European Commission and China and the European Union and the African Union.
- (4) **Agriculture and food security:** raising productivity in the agricultural sector is key to achieving progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in general and MDG 1 on poverty and hunger in particular. Trilateral cooperation could enhance Africa's agricultural productivity and production levels, and contribute to greater food security in a sustainable manner, with due attention to the socio-economic, environmental and health aspects of food production. The Commission proposes to explore synergies that could be obtained from trilateral cooperation in: agricultural research and innovation, with a special emphasis on food staples; control of animal diseases; and food safety with a special emphasis on definition and compliance with Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards. Trilateral cooperation should be framed in the context of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), which forms the long-term agenda for Africa's agricultural development.

2.3. Development policy dialogue and development partnership

To achieve the above objectives, dialogue at Headquarters and local level should be expanded on the basis of the existing EU-Africa and EU-China dialogues and complement also the UN framework. It is important to foster a culture of exchange and consultation at all levels. A parallel track of think tank dialogues would support policy makers in enhancing mutual understanding on respective policies and approaches and identifying cooperation opportunities while contributing to capacity building on research and fostering people-to-people exchanges.

Dialogue should be organised and strengthened at various levels, building on existing structures and fora:

- at continental level: to promote African continental and regional integration we look to the AUC to play a major role in this dialogue. The Head of the EU Delegation to the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, could be a focal point for organising regular and ad hoc consultations between the AU, the EU and China notably in the area of peace and security.
- at regional level: the European Commission has played a unique role in strengthening Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and has a strong instrument for cooperation under the EDF. The various Regional Strategies and Indicative Programmes could be the starting point to promote trilateral cooperation in all the proposed sectors, but especially in infrastructure where the appraisal and implementation of large energy and telecommunications programmes or multi modal transport corridors need a regional dimension at institutional and managerial level to support the national framework⁸.
- at country (Ambassador) level for regular and ad hoc exchanges of information and views as well as in multilateral country-led frameworks
- in EU/China bilateral dialogue: put Africa as a regular item on the agenda for EU-China consultations, in the strategic dialogue, joint committee and the Africa troika and the EU-China summits. Where feasible the appropriate African counterparts should be involved.

In order to promote the partnership for development (MDG 8) and the effectiveness of development aid (Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness⁹) there is a particular need to expand ongoing exchanges of information and experiences with the African partners on country strategies and how each side carries out and evaluates its development policy with the aim to improve complementarities and division of labour, the use of country systems, predictability and management by results with fewer procedural constraints in delivering aid. This can be done through study visits, placements of officials and regular consultations at headquarters and country level. 'Donor coordination meetings' could be expanded into 'coordination meetings of development partners', and China's experiences could be fed into this process. The International Poverty Reduction Centre in China aims to become a platform for such exchanges and has reached out to the OECD-Development Assistance Committee and traditional donors and the EU should support such endeavours. The Heiligendamm Dialogue Process, in which China is participating, may contribute to providing such a new approach. The OECD's policy of enhanced engagement as well as the DAC's current reflections on preparing a new DAC mandate to meet future challenges may also provide new insights. Trilateral cooperation in Africa could underpin this process with practical experiences and provide useful lessons to feed into the current debate on aid and development effectiveness.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Trilateral cooperation shall be progressive, but change can bring about improved results in addressing global development challenges in an effective multilateral way. The three partners

⁸ These regional interventions should only be implemented when certain conditions (governance, institutional and managerial capacity at regional level, efficiency of the sector and regional organisations) are in place to enable the favourable environment necessary to carry out the various operations foreseen.

⁹ was. China is a signatory of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness endorsed on 2 March 2005. China is actively studying other signatories' and the OECD DAC's activities in this respect. China also takes part in the follow-up process (e.g. Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in September 2008)

can jointly develop common interests and discuss crucial global challenges while pursuing their bilateral relations. The process will strengthen their respective bilateral partnerships and increase the African Union's ability to play its role as a key actor in Africa's development and on the international stage. The overall result of this trilateral co-operation will contribute to shared responsibility for global governance and development.

The European Commission invites EU Member States, African and Chinese partners to consider and support the above proposals and to cooperate in organising trilateral initiatives along the following lines:

- Enhance coordination in relevant international organisations and initiatives, particularly around African initiatives, and identify the appropriate modalities for cooperation.
- Enhance the exchange of visits and officials of all sides to learn from each other and create a network supporting trilateral dialogue and cooperation at international, HQ and country level and improve information flow.
- Organise an annual meeting of senior officials (EU-AU-China) at the rotating initiative of the partners to coordinate dialogue and cooperation strategically.
- Invite the AU troika to join the EU-China annual dialogue on Africa.
- Enhance research and knowledge generation in the sectors identified.
- Enter into specific agreements between agencies, institutions and associations to facilitate results-oriented joint initiatives.
- Submit this Communication to the African and Chinese partners for discussion at summit or ministerial levels.

The Commission therefore requests the Council and European Parliament to endorse the above proposals, with a view to further discussion with the EU's African and Chinese counterparts.