

JOINT AFRICA-EUROPE CIVIL SOCIETY RECOMMENDATIONS

7TH AU-EU SUMMIT IN LUANDA,
ANGOLA, 24-25 NOVEMBER 20



PREAMBLE

African and European civil society organizations urge AU and EU Heads of State and Government to take full advantage of the opportunity the AU-EU Summit offers to build a transformative partnership grounded in solidarity, equity, and justice—one that delivers for people and planet, not profit.

This partnership must also guarantee an enabling environment for civil society and ensure that citizens and their representative organizations can engage freely, safely, and meaningfully in shaping shared futures.

A renewed AU-EU partnership is possible: one that promotes inclusive dialogues with youth, civil society, and diverse stakeholders, one that is committed to equitable and transparent decision-making processes, recognizes power imbalances and the historical debt of Europe towards Africa.

As the leaders of African and European countries, members of the African Union and European Union, gather in Luanda for the 7th AU-EU Summit, we observe a shifting and turbulent situation globally. Now is the moment for a reset. One that builds a genuine, equitable, and sustainable partnership between Africa and Europe — rooted in the principles of policy coherence, justice, ecology, and dignity.

Since the 6th AU-EU Summit in 2022, civil society and youth actors from both the African and European continents have met regularly, building people-to-people connections and organizing themselves to speak with one voice. This has resulted in a proposal for a Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (CSEM)¹ in the partnership and the launch of an autonomous Africa-Europe Civil Society Platform². Despite these achievements,

we observe the persistent challenges civil society faces in its efforts to participate meaningfully in the Partnership.

Undeterred, we present our common concerns, hopes and forward-looking solutions for the AU-EU partnership. Our messages for the leaders gathered in Luanda, collectively built through open consultation in three workshops, prioritize the voice of the most-affected (over louder voices that are already heard), address deep-rooted causes of problems (over symptoms), and focus on transversal issues that touch many of us (over siloed thinking). Our recommendations are grouped into three chapters: Rights and stability; Structural transformations; and Funding. We submit them in the spirit of fostering constructive cooperation with civil society, both as a trusted partner and bridge to community realities.

RIGHTS & STABILITY

This section addresses human rights, civic space, social rights and human development, peace and security, migration and mobility.

Human Rights

Human rights are a cornerstone of the AU-EU partnership, yet gaps and challenges persist amid democratic backsliding, gender backlash, repression of civic freedoms, and growing state control on both continents. Among the most pressing issues are the increased use of security laws to restrict dissent, all forms of gender-based violence, and overall weak accountability mechanisms for human rights violations.

Protecting fundamental rights such as: gender equality and equity, youth participation, and freedom of expression, among others— is vital to credibility and trust between both regions. Building inclusive and thriving societies requires ensuring that women and girls can fully exercise their

¹ <https://bit.ly/2024CSEM>

² www.africaeuropecsplatform.network

rights, live free from violence and discrimination, and actively contribute to their communities.

Sustained commitment to and effective application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol, and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights contribute to overall strengthening of the partnership and create the necessary preconditions for the successful realization of the Joint Vision 2030.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Reaffirm universal and indivisible human rights and rule of law as the foundation of all AU–EU cooperation, including by ratifying and implementing relevant frameworks, strategies and policies.
- Reaffirm their full commitment to advancing gender equality and upholding the rights of women and girls. This includes the comprehensive implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol.
- Deepen the regular human rights dialogue between the AU and EU to safeguard and promote human rights on both continents. Particular focus should be on advancing effective cooperation mechanisms that go beyond dialogue to tangible actions, including protection and promotion of civil society space and political participation., in order to:
- Guarantee protection and support to human rights defenders, journalists, women activists, women's rights organizations, disabled people's organizations and environmental defenders.
- Ensure that constitutional and legal reforms are carried out through inclusive, participatory and transparent processes.
- Protect civic freedoms during electoral and constitutional cycles, when restrictions and security prerogatives often intensify.
- Ensure access to justice and reinforce accountability systems.

Civic Space and participation

Alongside the respect of human rights, an open civic space is fundamental to democratic governance, policy accountability, and effective part-

nership. Structured civil society engagement brings valuable grassroots perspectives, fosters mutual understanding, and strengthens the overall impact and legitimacy of the partnership. However, civil society on both continents is increasingly subject to restrictive laws on assembly, association, and registration. Their operations are under pressure due to global funding cuts. Systemic barriers, such as a lack of awareness and accessibility, for young people in hard-to-reach areas and persons with disabilities for example, also prevent them from contributing to their voices and experiences.

Human rights defenders, journalists, and lawyers face harassment online and offline. All stakeholders should be able to participate safely and freely, without discrimination, obstruction, intimidation, or fear of reprisals—both online and offline.

In terms of regular and structured civil society and youth engagement in the Partnership, consultation remains limited and exclusive, without timely access to information, real decision-making power or feedback loops. With the 7th Summit, there is an opportunity to jointly invest in a sustainable, institutionalized mechanism for regular and meaningful CSO/youth involvement in the AU-EU Partnership processes going forward.

AU–EU cooperation must protect civic freedoms and be exemplary in ensuring representation for diverse and grassroots civil society, youth and communities beyond token consultation.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Institutionalize civil society participation in the AU–EU partnership and in the monitoring mechanisms and follow-up to the Luanda Summit, considering the CSEM proposal as a starting point.
- Safeguard freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression across all contexts, both offline and online.
- Ensure that laws and regulations governing online expression, association and assembly are clear, transparent and subject to judicial oversight, and that no one is penalized for legitimate civic engagement, online organizing or digital expression.
- Institutionalize and enforce Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for Indigenous

Peoples affected by investment or infrastructure projects.

- Establish dedicated, predictable, flexible and accessible funding instruments for CSOs—including rapid response, operational, and core funding. Increase accessibility of EU funding for small and local African organizations.

Human Development

Human development is an overarching lens through which we consider rights and stability within the Partnership. The success and legitimacy of the AU-EU partnership depend on whether it advances people's rights to food, health, education, decent work, and social protection – which are critical to achieve sustainable development. Cooperation should be built on the principles of “leave no one behind”, intersectionality and community-level empowerment of women and youth in all their diversity.

The EU's current approach to partnerships (through the Global Gateway), with its focus on investment in infrastructure, risks diverting support from programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening human development and ensuring fair access to essential public services for all, on an equal basis as without discrimination based on gender, age, disability, or any other ground

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Increase the share of public resources supporting health, education, social protection and skills development, including by safeguarding EU Official Development Assistance (ODA) for essential services to strengthen public systems centered on people and leaving no one behind, including in fragile and crisis-affected contexts.
- Strengthen their partnership to achieve African health sovereignty, with a strong rights-based approach - including particular attention to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as essential elements to achieving universal health coverage (UHC), along the continuum of prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care including by:

- Recognizing female genital mutilation (FGM) as a health emergency¹, with deep social and economic consequences for society at large, whose elimination must come through the eradication of its root causes. Effective and mandatory training for health professionals is part of the solution.
- Strengthening African health Research and Innovation (R&I) systems—including regulatory and manufacturing capacities – and the Africa CDC and African Medicines Agency for equitable access to quality care.
- Support teacher training, public education systems and strengthen higher education cooperation, as well as vocational, technical training and skills development linked to local labor markets.
- Invest in youth and women-led entrepreneurship, socially inclusive business models (SIBMs), social enterprise, fair wages, and the care and green economies. Launch AU-EU youth employment and social protection dialogues.
- Promote and support universal and shock-responsive social protection floors.
- Ensure the right to food by integrating agroecological transition, the promotion of farmer-managed seed systems, and food sovereignty into human development priorities.

Peace & Security

Sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and human security. A collaborative approach to fostering systemic resilience, social cohesion and promoting human security is essential in conflict prevention and resolution. Initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue, enhancing civilian protection, and dismantling the actors and networks that fuel violence are critical. Ensuring that peace efforts are inclusive, gender-responsive, and grounded in human rights is key to long-term stability and trust between institutions and societies.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/14-04-2025-new-study-highlights-multiple-long-term-health-complications-from-female-genital-mutilation>

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Strengthen humanitarian access and protection of civilians, including displaced populations.
- Increase participation of women and youth in all peace processes and accelerate the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas.
- Prioritize prevention through inclusion, justice, and socio-economic investment.
- Develop an AU-EU joint prevention strategy integrating governance and resilience, building on the AU's "Silencing the Guns" Agenda, APSA, EU's Strategic Compass and African Humanitarian Agency, and the Joint AU-EU MoU on Peace, Security and Governance (2018).
- Ensure adequate and predictable funding for AU-led peace operations under UNSC Resolution 2719.

Migration & Mobility

Migration is a structural and long-term feature of AU-EU relations. Whilst migration has the potential to reduce inequalities and drive shared prosperity, it can also deepen existing inequalities or even create new ones. The question of international migration cannot be addressed in isolation from the broader relationship between the two continents and issues such as the continuously widening economic disparities at the global scale, the generation, distribution and utilization of wealth, the organization of the world's raw materials extraction and markets and international finance and taxation systems.

The African Union and European Union must work more closely together to enhance migration and mobility cooperation as a legitimate process, by increasing legal migration opportunities and humane and just migration policies. Both continents must move from containment to cooperation, ensuring that mobility supports education, work, and development.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Prioritize the protection of people - not borders - by expanding access to regular migration pathways, starting from a review of visa regimes which disproportionately burden

African citizens. Expand safe and legal pathways for mobility focused on education and skills, including for students, researchers, and workers.

- Prevent trafficking and exploitation, and dismantle barriers that push people into dangerous routes, guarantee access to justice and basic services, and ensure fair and dignified treatment for all migrants and refugees, regardless of status.
- Refrain from promoting an external agenda on migration that aims at boosting border control and containing migration in African countries (through bilateral partnerships and agreements). This approach contributes to increasing human rights violations, pushing people on more dangerous routes, and negatively impact (sub)regional mobility patterns fostering labor, education and sustainable development.
- Implement the AU Free Movement Protocol and make sure that cooperation on migration management between the EU and African states aligns with it at country and regional level.
- Strengthen diaspora engagement and positive narratives around migrants that emphasizes the manifold contributions they make to the life of the societies to which they migrate and to stress the positive impact they make on the development and the economies of both continents.
- Confront xenophobia and discrimination by advancing community-led initiatives that foster solidarity and mutual understanding with displaced populations and by enforcing anti-discrimination laws.

STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

This section addresses food sovereignty, the green and digital transitions, industrialization, trade and integration, and the reform of multilateral institutions.

Food sovereignty through agroecology

Small-scale food producers – family farmers, fishers, pastoralists, forest people, Indigenous

Peoples, urban and peri-urban farmers – represent the majority of African people, the source of healthy diets for the continent’s population, and the custodians of Africa’s rich biodiversity. African governments have come to recognize the need to break dependence on imported food and to reinforce domestic food production. However, with EU support, they are tending to privilege investment in industrial models of production driven by corporate interests rather than in resilient, inclusive, and locally rooted food systems.

We call on upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Prioritize support for agroecology, small-scale food production, territorial markets, and farmer-managed seed systems.
- Put a halt to land and ocean grabbing and the exportation of toxic agrochemicals.

Green Transition

Climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation threaten livelihoods across both continents. Yet the crises are not being addressed with the urgency they demand, and both the costs of inaction and the economic opportunities of the transition remain insufficiently recognized. For instance, climate mitigation—including the urgently needed just transition to renewable energy and the phase-out of fossil fuels—along with adaptation to escalating climate impacts and the management of loss and damage, continue to play only a marginal role in the Summit preparations.

Instead, responses too often prioritize false solutions—such as carbon markets, carbon offsetting, or extractive “green” projects—over genuine investments in local resilience. Additionally, the creeping influence of genetically modified crops, synthetic inputs, and intellectual property regimes threaten the very basis of African seed and food sovereignty. Seeds are life and culture; protecting farmer-managed seed systems ensures biodiversity, resilience, and farmer autonomy.

A just green transition must uphold ecological rights and local sovereignty, aligning with the AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy (2022–2032) and the Paris Agreement.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Commit to urgent, 1.5°C-aligned climate action by delivering on the Paris Agreement,

affordable and clean energy (SDG7), Africa’s renewable energy ambition of 300 GW by 2030, and implementing the COP28 global energy goals by scaling up targets—tripling renewables, doubling energy efficiency, phasing out and transitioning away from fossil fuels, and advancing just, inclusive, and locally driven energy transitions aligned with national priorities, by involving African civil society in shaping climate policies and finance.

- End public support for fossil fuel investments, redirect funds toward renewable energy, regulate the private sector to align with the Paris Agreement, and halt the promotion of fossil gas, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) as a transition fuel.
- Scale up adaptation and loss and damage concessional finance with clear targets, alignment with African priorities, predictable timelines, and balanced allocation across climate pillars. This financing must be grant-based, additional, and accessible, addressing water, food systems, health, and climate-resilient infrastructure in pursuit of a just transition
- Protect biodiversity through community-led conservation and nature-based solutions, respecting land and ocean rights.
- Recognize land rights as fundamental and the basis for access to food, water, housing and natural resources and protect communities and small-scale farmers against land-grabbing in investment agreements.
- Ensure that investments are implemented only after an identification of available land and an assessment of social, economic and environmental impact have been conducted with direct participation of local communities and Indigenous Peoples and after obtaining their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for land acquisition.
- Legally recognize, protect and promote farmer-managed seed systems.
- Prohibit EU export to and importation in Africa of highly hazardous pesticides that are banned in Europe.
- The EU must recognize and support Africa’s leadership in a just transition by backing technology transfer, local manufacturing, skills development, fair value chain participation

and innovation partnerships to ensure, in particular, that green hydrogen and critical minerals fuel local industrialization and decent job creation—not extractive export models. The EU must back technology transfer, local manufacturing, skills development, and innovation partnerships to enable equitable green industrialization.

- Mainstream agroecology and food sovereignty across AU–EU cooperation by supporting farmers’ innovations and local solutions.
- Reform global finance systems to unlock affordable, equitable climate finance. This means championing a UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt, scaling up grant-based and concessional finance, tripling public climate finance by 2035, scaling up of climate finance to developing countries to at least USD 1.3 trillion annually, and ensuring direct access for African countries and communities.

Digital Transition

With equitable access and robust governance, digitalization can drive innovation and inclusive progress. The digital divide—especially for rural youth and women—limits both economic participation and civic empowerment. This is compounded by cyber-violence and the domination of data governance and connectivity markets by private monopolies. Data sovereignty and protection, digital rights and ethics safeguards must accompany infrastructure and all artificial intelligence projects.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Safeguard data privacy and AI ethics standards by adopting and applying transparent governance frameworks across both continents.
- Invest in expanded public digital infrastructure and affordable connectivity for rural and underserved areas.
- Support African-led youth innovation and digital literacy through local hubs, skills development, and education reform.
- Enhance joint AU–EU learning on digital governance through the EU–AU Innovation Agenda and Smart Africa Alliance.

Industrialization, Trade & Integration

Structural transformation depends on building productive, inclusive economies. However, private sector behavior has come under scrutiny in both regions with resource extraction framed as “green growth”, investment facilitation agreements bypassing local consultation, and trade liberalization without adequate social and environmental safeguards. Cooperation must prioritize local value addition, decent work, and circular economy principles—avoiding a race for raw materials.

Africa must not remain a pawn in global power struggles or repeat colonial extractivist patterns under the guise of renewable energy. True transformation requires relocating value chains to African regions rich in energy, minerals, agriculture, and labour, while establishing fair and equitable partnerships. African leaders must therefore invest in infrastructure, industrial reform, and skills development to add value locally rather than exporting raw materials. By strengthening manufacturing, energy, and transport systems and fostering innovation through public-private collaboration, Africa can boost exports of refined goods, reduce import dependency, create jobs, and build a more self-reliant and competitive economy.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers great potential for sustainable industrialization and intra-African trade and integration. Transparent and accountable governance of AfCFTA needs to be complemented by strong social and environmental standards to achieve sustainable industrialization and integration. In the new conception of mutually beneficial partnerships and joint responsibility, the EU’s model of Economic Partnership Agreements needs to be reviewed to prevent undermining regional integration and African countries’ ambitions and priorities.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Grant all African countries, regardless of their level of development, the same access to the EU market and the same protection mechanisms with regard to EU products.
- Ensure that trade and investment policies and the future Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships (CTIPs) that the EU intends to negotiate with African states are designed and

carried out in a manner that is transparent and fair, in respect of African states' sovereignty over their natural resources and raw materials and their economic and industrialization plans. Make sure that these policies and partnerships are beneficial to African local economies and communities, through local value creation and by enforcing corporate due diligence.

- Ensure trade agreements and investment frameworks uphold fair taxation, transparency and include chapters on safeguarding labor rights, environment and gender.
- Jointly support the establishment of a UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights, ensuring corporate responsibility and protection of human rights across global value chains.
- Monitor and transparently report on the environmental and social impacts of Global Gateway investments in cooperation with CSOs and local communities.
- Develop local economies and champion fair economic opportunities for all by engaging and empowering local sustainable and inclusive businesses in projects, prioritizing local companies, especially women and youth-led, that support environmental sustainability and the socio-economic needs of Indigenous and local communities in line with the 2023 UN General Assembly resolution on promoting the social economy.
- Develop and protect local and regional value chains and markets in green industries, pharmaceuticals, and food processing and reduce food import dependency and unfair competition.

Reform of Multilateral Institutions

The current global governance system does not reflect African realities. The reality is that there is limited follow-up on reform commitments beyond rhetorical support and African representation in multilateral fora is fragmented. The international financial system is particularly rigid and resistant to change, yet it should ensure greater involvement of African countries in decision-making to support sustainable economic development. Although Africa's 54 countries represent 18% of the world's population, they hold only 6.5% voting power of the International Mo-

netary Fund (IMF), despite being the largest group among the IMF's 191 members.

A reform of the United Nations, international financial institutions (IFIs), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) is essential to build fairer global rules. The AU's Common African Position on UN Reform calls for equitable representation and decision-making power.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Improve African representation in global governance bodies. In particular,
 - Support reform of the UN Security Council to include permanent African representation.
 - Democratize IFIs and enhance African voice in debt and finance governance.
- Carry out joint AU-EU initiatives on institutional reform processes (G20, UN, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), etc.).
- Align AU-EU cooperation with the Pact for the Future and UN80 Initiative.

FUNDING

This section addresses development finance, governance, transparency and accountability.

Development Finance

Global economic governance and financing for development are critical issues for the AU, EU and their member states. The promotion of fair global finance practices and rules that fight inequality, extreme wealth concentration, and the climate crisis should be a top priority for both continents.

The EU's international cooperation is undergoing major transformation, with a strong focus on investments in infrastructure and securing the EU's interests. The Global Gateway strategy is emblematic of this shift and is increasingly a main pillar of the EU's relations with partner countries—including those in Africa, as evidenced by the Africa-Europe Investment Package. The Global Gateway "win-win" investment model aims to mobilize private capital for global development. However, the shift towards loans and blended finance risks deepening debt vulnerabilities, especially in low-

income and fragile contexts. African economies are already facing the high cost of debt, high interest rates, unfavorable treatment by global credit rating agencies and short repayment periods offered by the international financial system.

Borrowing is often so expensive that governments end up spending more on debt servicing than on essential sectors such as agriculture, health and education. Moreover, it limits their ability to invest in projects or increase domestic savings, leaving them more vulnerable to debt crises. For example, Ghana spends 26% of its government revenue on interest payments, compared with just 3% for France, despite having a lower debt-to-GDP ratio. Further, debt restructuring under frameworks such as the G20 Common Framework has been slow and complex. As of today, only four countries in Africa have applied to the G20 Common Framework. A clearer, faster, and more coherent approach to debt restructuring is needed.

In addition to debt instruments increasingly taking the place of grants, further projected drops in official development assistance (estimated at between 9 to 17% in 2025 by the OECD) will undermine shared sustainable development objectives and will impact on human development and security and on the ability of civil society to operate where it's needed most.

Mobilizing domestic resources in Africa is essential, as it will enable the financing of universal, sustainable, and high-quality public services. This will only be possible if progressive tax systems that tax wealth and high net worth are guaranteed, progress is made on the United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Preserve predictable and long-term grants-based financing for climate, social sectors, human development, and non-bankable public goods and promote public-public partnerships, safeguarding equitable access to essential services.
- Guarantee that Official Development Aid and other development financing reaches local civil society, communities, and inclusive micro, small and medium private sector actors in

Africa (particularly women and youth-owned businesses).

- Recognize African philanthropy, remittances, and diaspora finance as complementary channels.
- Ensure that debt-based instruments respect sustainability thresholds, as well as due diligence and transparency standards.
- Reform global finance systems to unlock affordable, equitable climate finance. Triple public climate finance by 2035 to reach at least USD 1.3 trillion annually and ensure direct access for African countries and communities.
- Support the setting up a debt resolution mechanism at UN level, acknowledging that debt restructuring under frameworks such as the G20 Common Framework has failed to deliver the expected results, being slow, creditor-driven and not fit for purpose.
- Support the setting up of the United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation.
- Support the establishment of an African Credit Rating Agency (AfCRA).

Specifically urge EU Member States to:

- Take a constructive approach in view of the finalization of the legally binding UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation in December, to ensure countries can mobilize domestic resources effectively and provide vital services to their citizens—free from loopholes and harmful tax practices.
- Recognize the serious limitations of existing debt resolution frameworks and to champion establishing a UN Convention on Debt (building upon paragraph 50(f) of the Sevilla Commitment) to address this systemic challenge.
- Uphold their commitment to allocating 0.7% of GNI to Official Development Assistance (ODA), with poverty reduction at its core and cancelling overdue debts.

Governance, Transparency & Accountability

We stand by our conviction that for a meaningful and people-centered partnership, there must be regular monitoring, dialogue, and mechanisms to convey the concerns, interests and needs of communities most impacted by it, including in funding and financing decisions. Accountability mechanisms that include civil society and parliaments ensure that investments serve public interest and human rights rather than political or corporate priorities. Currently, limited public data is available on calls for proposals, funding allocations, volumes and final beneficiaries of funds from the Africa-Europe Investment Package.

We call upon AU and EU Heads of State to:

- Integrate transparency commitments into future AU-EU Summit outcomes, including to:
- Publish AU-EU partnership financial reports with impact data annually.
- Implement open contracting, public disclosure of financing agreements, and social impact audits, including with CSOs.
- Guarantee inclusive governance and accountability in AU-EU cooperation by creating formal roles for civil society, youth, and communities in monitoring energy, finance, and adaptation partnerships, ensuring transparency and meaningful participation. Institutionalize participatory monitoring through civil society platforms (CSEM, youth councils, community networks).
- Accelerate joint AU-EU action to combat illicit financial flows (IFFs) and promote fair taxation.

The CSEP is an independent network of civil society and youth organizations established with the goal of integrating an engagement mechanism for regular and structured exchange in the AU-EU partnership. It is made up of over 375 individuals representing 250 organizations and is led by a team of volunteers from Africa and Europe.

