

# A New Framework for European Relations with Africa - 18/10/11



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Speech delivered by Nick Westcott, Managing Director Africa EEAS, to the EUISS conference on EU-Africa foreign policy after Lisbon, 18 October 2011

Nick Westcott outlines a new framework for European relations with Africa following the setting up of the European External Action Service. The central message of his speech is that “the EU must put the African people at the heart of its policy in Africa”. This principle is put into practice in three ways supporting peace, promoting prosperity, and working through partnership with African countries and others. He stresses how the Lisbon Treaty has helped bring a “new coherence, focus and impetus” to European relations with Africa, and how the EEAS acts as the “servant of the member states, not the master”. Mr Westcott outlines the various ways in which the EU engages with Africa and its people: from humanitarian assistance to trade and investment; from security and stability to development and climate action."

Read the full speech here:

It is only nine months since the creation of the European External Action Service, and only eight since I took up the job of Managing Director for Africa. So a little background on the EEAS and the MD's role might be useful. The core of my message today, however, is how the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty has helped bring a new coherence, focus and impetus to European relations with Africa – at a time when Africa has never been more important to Europe and, at the same time, some people are beginning to question the continued importance of Europe to Africa.

Without doubt, the Lisbon Treaty marks a turning point in the EU's external policies. Not because with the wave of a magic treaty we have a single foreign policy. Nor because bilateral embassies will give way to EU delegations. But because we have at last created a structure and a service that can assure more effective *coherence* between the EU institutions and the member states. Even so, the EEAS is still in its infancy. It is learning to walk, and in some cases to run. But we have still to put in place the mechanisms – the information flows, the information sharing, the decision-making processes, the devolution of responsibilities – that will enable us to operate most effectively. The EEAS remains a work in progress, though the progress is fast, as I will illustrate.

Part of the EEAS's function is to define the strategic direction for European relations with the rest of the world. It is that strategic framework for our collective action in Africa that I intend to set out today. In doing so, the EEAS acts as the *servant* of the member states, not the master. Our aim is to help the EU express and implement the common purpose and common policies that the member states decide.

The same applies to the EEAS's relations with the other European institutions. We exist to support the work overseas of the many and different parts of the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. This is why our Heads of Delegation take responsibility for *all* aspects of European relations with any third country, and are responsible to the President and members of the Commission as much as to the President of the European Council and the High Representative. We spend as much of our time working with other Commissioners, with Parliamentarians and with member states as we do for the High Representative. Baroness Ashton is our boss and we are answerable to her, with her HR hat on, for the conduct of the EU's foreign policy, and, with her Vice-President's hat on, for the overall coherence of the EU's external action. So we provide a helping hand, advice and support to all other parts of the European family too. I will come back to this later.

The evolution of the EU's foreign policy is part of the wider evolution of Europe. Member states of course retain their own sovereign foreign policies, their own views, their own bilateral relationships with non-EU countries. But we are increasingly driven to work together and to express a common point of view by our common interests in the world, whether this is on human rights, climate change, terrorism or piracy. As one of my colleagues recently described it, this is not so much having a single *voice* as a single *message*.

This is a very dynamic period in world affairs. The rise of the emerging economies, the economic crisis in some western countries since 2008, the Arab Spring – these are all major changes on a global scale that we must respond and adjust to. The European Council at the end of this week will be one of the most important in recent years, as the EU has to face up to the implications of the Euro-zone crisis. Similarly the growing role of the EU and its member states in the “southern neighbourhood” and the Middle East marks an important shift. So Europe is changing, and the world in which it operates is changing. We need to see EU-Africa relations in this wider context.

Africa too has been changing, even faster in many ways than Europe.

When the tide of independence swept through Africa, it brought a period of great hope to the continent in the 1960s. But the road of nationhood proved more bumpy than expected. In retrospect, this is scarcely surprising. Nations do not emerge fully formed like Athena from the head of Zeus (even if they tend to be fully armed, as she was). In western Europe it took centuries for viable nation states to form, let alone for them to develop democratic government. Despite the unity and power that inspired the nationalist movements in Africa, there were bound to be teething troubles.

In some countries these were severe. By the 1980s, over half of African states had suffered a coup, civil war or unconstitutional change of government. Many had become mired in corruption. And, despite significant support from international organisations and donors, the aspiration of rapid prosperity had been swamped in a welter of economic problems. Several

countries were even worse off than they had been at independence. The hopes seemed dashed.

Since then, hope has been restored. In many African countries, experience led to more rational economic policies. Politically, NEPAD showed the way to building more accountable government. A number of one-party states restored the right to form opposition parties. Meaningful elections became more common. Ordinary Africans also sought to strengthen their own voice by forming a growing number of civil society organisations, whether development ngos, political and business lobby groups, human rights monitoring organisations, or economic and political think tanks. Some countries have been moving faster than others. But the trend is clear.

Take West Africa. The past three years have seen a peaceful change of government in Ghana, a successful transition back to democratically elected governments in Guinea and Niger, successful elections in Nigeria, Togo, Benin and (touch wood) Liberia. No election is perfect, but the touchstone is whether the result can be said to reflect accurately the will of the people. In Cote d'Ivoire, it was clear what the will of the people was and the international community – from ECOWAS, through the AU, the UN and the EU – showed its determination to support the Ivorian people to ensure the outcome of the election was respected.

With more stable and accountable government comes more robust economic growth. Africa as a whole is growing healthily, at around 5% a year, with some countries, like Ghana and Nigeria, well above average though others, like South Africa, lagging. Recent reviews of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have shown both what progress has been made in the last 11 years, but also how great the challenge still is.

This year, 2011, has seen another revolution, this time across North Africa. No such revolution is a smooth process. As many African countries have found, trying to re-build democracy after years of authoritarian rule or civil war is not easy. Accountable institutions need to be built, civic education spread, and confidence in the structures of government restored. There is a tremendous pent up demand for jobs as much as for freedom of expression among young people that it is hard to satisfy. For Tunisia, Egypt and now Libya, the task is daunting. But the hope of a better future is restored.

One thing is clear from these developments on the African continent. Sooner or later, people everywhere will demonstrate their determination, and assert their right, to choose their own rulers, not have their rulers choose themselves (or their sons...).

The EU understands this. It was born itself from two of the bloodiest and costliest wars ever fought by mankind. The people of Europe decided there must be a better way of settling their differences. Slowly, painfully, laboriously, the EU has been built to provide that. Slowly because each step forward was only by agreement of the elected governments of the member states, each of whom had to answer to their electorates.

So from our own experience, and from our partnership with African countries over the past 50 years, we draw one crucial conclusion: **that the EU must put the African people at the heart of its policy in Africa.**

We put this principle into practice in three ways: in seeking to promote peace and security on the continent; in promoting prosperity and development for all people; and in our partnership with Africa governments and with the people themselves.

## Peace

To anyone who has lived in or visited a war-ravaged country, the importance of being able to live in peace and security is overwhelming. Poverty makes life hard. But violence puts life itself at risk, as well as destroying wealth and increasing poverty. The EU is therefore working tirelessly to promote peace, security and stability throughout Africa. We do so in cooperation with the UN and other international organisations and foreign governments. But above all we do it in cooperation with African countries themselves and with the African Union.

Let me take one example – **Somalia**. This has been one of the most intractable conflicts in Africa. External efforts to resolve it, whether by near neighbours or those further afield, whether by force or by negotiation have so far failed. There can only be an internal solution, that the people of the country will accept. And yet the consequences of the conflict, through the spread of terrorism and piracy, are affecting the whole world. So the international community cannot walk away, cannot and should not abandon it to its fate. That this year's drought in Eastern Africa has also had the most dire consequences in Somalia is equally as much a result of politics as of rainfall. Twenty years of conflict have prevented people building up defences against such natural disasters, and are now preventing aid getting to some of the most vulnerable people. They may die of starvation as a result.

So what is the EU doing? This is one of the unsung stories of Europe's new foreign policy. We are pursuing a four pronged strategy:

(a) we are directly combating piracy through the EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta. In July this year 17 ships and nearly 400 crew were being held hostage by Somali pirates. Ransoms run into millions of dollars and the full cost to the shipping industry and the global economy is many times that. In the three months since then, Op Atalanta has been directly responsible for foiling three attempted pirate attacks of merchant ships, and has deterred many more. It works in close cooperation with other naval attachments from the US, Russia, China and India. There is scarcely a more multinational operation in the world. But piracy can only be contained at sea. A permanent solution must be found on land. The urgency of this has been highlighted in recent weeks by the change in tactics by pirates in conjunction it seems with Al-Shabab to seize western hostages from the Kenyan coast, though whether primarily for financial or political gain is yet unclear.

(b) This is why the second string to our help is on land. The 9000-strong AU peace-keeping force AMISOM is funded largely by the EU, through the AU's African Peace Facility. This is a joint Facility established in 2001 that allows the EU to fund operations identified by the African side as their highest priorities. It has an annual budget of €400m, the bulk of which currently goes to AMISOM. The purpose of AMISOM is to create a sufficient zone of security in south-central Somalia, around Mogadishu, so that the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Parliament can begin to establish a more effective administration. AMISOM can only be a temporary solution, and the EU is also helping to train Somalia's own security forces, through the EU Training Mission (EUTM) in Uganda. The first batch of trainees is already back in Somalia and doing a good job fighting along-side AMISOM.

(c) Thirdly, the EU is working with the UN to promote inclusive local political negotiations to find a long-term solution. We support capacity-building for the TFG, and encourage them to build links with the semi-autonomous regions of Puntland and Galamdug.

(d) Finally, the EU continues to provide humanitarian support through ECHO for those most in need, currently worth over €160 million this year in the region. With 12 million people affected by the famine, and 750,000 actually at risk of starvation, this support is essential to keep people alive. But we must persevere with our efforts to find a lasting solution that will prevent such a disaster happening again.

To draw together the various strands of the EU's strategy for the Horn of Africa, the High Representative will be presenting a Strategic Framework to EU Foreign Ministers at next month's Council. This will provide a more comprehensive framework for the EU's policies throughout the region and ensure we are able to achieve the coherence we seek.

Examples could be multiplied. In **Cote d'Ivoire**, the EU played an essential role in support of ECOWAS, the AU and the UN by acting swiftly to apply sanctions on the regime of Laurent Gbagbo, sanctions that effectively cut off his supply of funds and helped cut significantly the time it took to resolve the crisis.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo** the EU has been for many years at the forefront of efforts to restore peace, bring security and stability to the Great Lakes region and help the DRC build a democratic state. There are not only two CSDP security missions there (EUSEC and EUPOL) but currently a large EU Election Observation Mission supporting the democratic process.

As the DRC illustrates, achieving peace is about more than stopping war. It is about building institutions that are robust enough to preserve that peace and those freedoms. That is why building strong *and accountable governments* is as crucial for peace in Africa as conflict prevention or peace-keeping activities. This accountability – built on free speech, democratic institutions, a vibrant civil society and the rule of law – is not always comfortable for governments. But it is good for them. So the EU devotes a good deal of effort to helping African people achieve that accountability.

It is also about building a commitment to shared common values, to the principles of **human rights** that lie at the heart of the EU's external policies, because they are essential to achieving a community of nations that can live peacefully together.

An example of this is **Zimbabwe**. Again, we cannot work in isolation. We need to work with SADC, who have drawn up a roadmap setting out the path to elections and are accompanying Zimbabwe along that road, as well as with all parties in the Zimbabwean Government itself, who have committed themselves to implement the Global Political Agreement (GPA). These two processes together should enable the people of Zimbabwe to express their opinion, freely and fearlessly, about who they want to rule them in a free, fair, transparent and peaceful election open to international and domestic scrutiny.

Democracy does not mean a smooth ride. People don't always agree. Political disputes over the right course of action can still be intense. But it does mean that government is accountable, and that disputes can be settled by debate, not by violence.

The threat from **terrorism** is particularly damaging in this respect. Its fundamental precept is the antithesis of democracy – that the minority is right and that any means, however violent and unjust, is justified in trying to impose their own. The countries of the **Sahel** and **Nigeria** face a growing threat, partly as a consequence spillover from the conflict in Libya. The EU and its member states stand four-square with the democratic governments of that region in working to eliminate this threat to their own peace and security – an approach set out in our recent *Strategy on Development and Security in the Sahel*.

## **Prosperity**

The second theme of the EU's approach to its relations with Africa is prosperity.

Africa is a rich continent. It is rich in people. It is rich in raw materials. It has an abundance of land. And yet too many of its people remain poor. The EU is committed not just to reduce poverty but to build prosperity in Africa. This is the purpose of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and of the Cotonou Treaty, which define our collective relations with the continent and ACP members respectively.

Helping develop security and accountable government is an indispensable foundation for building development. But it is not sufficient.

### **The EU supports Africa's economic growth in three ways**

Firstly, we provide **humanitarian assistance** to alleviate suffering where it becomes acute. **ECHO** – the EC's Humanitarian Office – currently provides around €470 million pa in humanitarian and food operations in Africa, operating in 25 African countries. Our aim is to help all these countries move from temporary relief to permanent solutions. We therefore increasingly build in transitional mechanisms so that relief becomes development.

Secondly, the EU and its member states are one of the largest providers of **development assistance** in the world. In 2010 they provided close to €12 billion to sub-Saharan African countries. This huge sum is sometimes overlooked, or taken for granted. But it is something to which European people attach importance. The public commitment to the Millennium Development Goals underpins the large sum of European taxpayers' money that is dedicated to alleviating poverty.

But the EU's support for development extends beyond that. Aid can only do so much. Some indeed, including Zambia's Dambisa Moyo, argue that it is positively counter-productive. What we can agree on is that the only permanent solution to poverty is to stimulate economic growth and create real jobs in the real economy.

The EU therefore also helps by encouraging **trade** between Africa and the EU, providing full access to its markets for most African goods – and this has been the case over the past 50 years. But unilateral access to EU markets is not enough, we need real trade and development agreements that, despite being vastly in favour of our African counterparts, encourage the gradual opening of their market and a virtuous circle of reform. These should also be compatible with WTO rules. We continue to negotiate these "Economic Partnership Agreements" with all the regions in Africa, looking for ways to enhance economic development and regional integration within Africa based on our own experience as a growing regional bloc.

**EPAs** have had a fraught negotiating history, and a bad press. The aim for us remains, crucially, an agreement to allow African countries the access they need to European markets, based on their own level of ambition, to allow their economies to grow, in a way that is compatible with WTO rules, and recognizes that in due course African economies will have to be globally competitive – as all countries must be – if they are to continue to prosper. I am pleased that there are some signs that the logjam on EPAs may be beginning to shift.

Africa's patterns of trade have been changing, particularly with imports from and exports to the emerging economies growing fast (as they are also for the rest of the world). But the EU remains Africa's most significant trading partner overall, with bilateral trade in goods worth €122,1 billion in 2010 (€59,6 billion of imports to the EU, mainly consisting of commodities and raw materials (oil, diamonds, agricultural products) and €62,5 billion of EU exports to sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa). Overall, the EU accounts for 35% of Africa's total trade, ahead of China and the US.

Finally, we seek to help by providing support for the creation of business-friendly environments that will encourage the internal and external **investment** essential for the creation of jobs that bring greater prosperity to families and communities. The world remains a competitive place. Africa has only to look at how some of the other emerging economies such as Brazil and India have had to invest hugely and undertake major economic reforms in order to get growth underway. I see no problem with encouraging inward investment in Africa from all quarters, East as well as West. My only advice to African countries is: - read the fine print. Ensure these investments are as much for your benefit as your partners'.

We know that climate can have a big impact on the potential for prosperity, as it does on the risks of insecurity. South Africa is about to host the COP 17 **Climate Change** Conference. This is a classic case where no country can solve the problem alone, but all must be involved in an effective solution is to be found. And every single person on the planet will be affected if we fail to tackle the problem before it is too late. So once again, governments must take their responsibility, accountable to all their citizens, and the EU and Africa work together to find a solution that will work.

## **Partnership**

The third theme is one that has already occurred throughout what I have said: that we can only achieve these aims of peace and prosperity for African people through partnership.

This partnership has three levels:

- Within the EU family, the partnership I mentioned at the outset between the EEAS and the other European institutions: with DEVCO on development, with ECHO on humanitarian relief, with DG TRADE on the EPAs, with DG CLIMA on the challenges of climate change, and with the EP on election observation and political support.
- the partnership with our own member states, the 27 countries of the EU, many of whom have their own long-standing relationships with African countries, which the EU complements; and with the many international organisations, from the UN to the ICC that work in Africa.
- the partnership with African governments and regional organisations, without whom we cannot work, and underpinning which is the partnership with African people

themselves, ensuring their engagement and understanding, listening to their concerns and trying to ensure that we proceed on a basis of mutual consent.

The last level of this partnership is crucial. Fortunately, the EU and Africa have agreed a **Joint Africa-EU Strategy** at the Lisbon joint Summit 5 years ago, that encompasses all the areas on which we seek to build our partnership, and provides common goals for our actions. Putting so ambitious a strategy into practice is inevitably challenging. But in many of the areas, cooperation is growing both within and outside the framework we have jointly put in place.

For ACP countries, the **Cotonou Treaty** sets out a further framework for our partnership. As we all know, development walks upon two legs – an economic leg and a political leg. If the relationship focuses solely on the first leg, it will only limp along. It will be unbalanced. So in all cases we want the political relationship, as identified in Article 8 of the Treaty, to be as robust as the economic one. This dialogue is not primarily a focus for moral lectures, but a realistic and honest dialogue about the realities of national policies and political activities in our respective countries and regions.

**South Africa** is not covered by Cotonou, but is one of the few countries in the world (along with the US, China, Russia, India and Brazil with which the EU has a full strategic partnership. The last EU-SA Summit in September demonstrated the strength and breadth of that relationship.

It is also important to remember that Europe's partnerships with Africa go well beyond the former colonial relationships. I was surprised to find in Ouagadougou that Luxembourg runs a significant aid programme in Burkina Faso, just as Ireland has in Tanzania. And it gives many African countries pause for thought when they realise that the EU's Development Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, comes from a country that has been independent far fewer years than any of them (except South Sudan).

But I want to end where I began, with the partnership between people.

There is a reality we often forget: that millions of Africans live in Europe, and millions of Europeans live in Africa. People travel back and forth incessantly. Some travel for family reasons, some for jobs, some for study, some for leisure. Some travel for a few days or weeks, some travel for years, some for their whole lives. All build links between the two continents that are often stronger than anything governments can do.

**Migration** is a politically sensitive issue in all countries. Some African countries are becoming a magnet for migration within their regions, just as the EU is for people from all over the world. Those countries know and understand the stresses it can bring, and that unmanaged, the political repercussions can be destructive. All our economies benefit from a measure of inward and outward migration. For example, many of those who fled West Africa in the decades since independence are now returning, bringing with them expertise and skills, knowledge and money accumulated during their stay in the EU. Why do they come back? Because the economic opportunities are multiplying as democracy and stability spread in previously war-torn countries.

As governments we need to recognise that people move, that these links exist. We should work with the grain of social changes. We must recognise that our fates are inextricably inter-twined because our people are. That too is part of our partnership.

## **Conclusion**

I have said enough. I hope my message about what the EU is trying to achieve in its partnership with Africa is now clearer. There is much more about it we could discuss, and given time, will do. But in all areas, our **focus** on peace and prosperity, and our **commitment** to achieving them through partnership with the people of Africa are the messages I want you to take away today.



Speech by **Dr Nicholas Westcott, Managing Director Africa, EEAS**