

S&D GROUP AFRICA WEEK 2017

YOUTH MESSAGE TO THE 5TH AFRICAN UNION-EUROPEAN UNION SUMMIT

The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D Group)¹ organised the second edition of its Africa Week initiative (S&D Group Africa Week 2017) - a series of political and cultural events within the European Parliament and at other venues - from 25th to 28th September 2017 in Brussels. In this framework, we invited 25 youth representatives, future leaders, from Africa and from Europe, including young Europeans from the diaspora, to discuss key challenges that our two continents are facing together and to draft a Youth Message to the 5th African Union-EU Summit which will take place in November 2017 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. This Youth Message is the result of the joint efforts by the African and European youth representatives that participated in the S&D Group Week 2017. It is supported by the S&D Group but does not represent an official position of the Group. We are committed to continue working together with the African and European youth in the future through similar joint events, internship opportunities, and in many other ways.

We, young people from across Africa and Europe, representing our political parties and youth organisations, came together for the S&D Group Africa Week hosted by the Progressive Alliance of Socialist & Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D Group) in September 2017, and

- set out how we see the future partnership between Europe and Africa and our collective feeling that it should be built on mutual respect, genuine understanding and, of course, tolerance and solidarity;
- confirmed our renewed commitment to the empowerment of Africa's and Europe's young people, recognising the challenges that remain to be addressed;
- recognised the efforts made to date by nation leaders and governments across Africa and Europe, and identified areas where we would like to see progress made on at the African Union-EU Summit in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in November 2017, and beyond;
- acknowledged progressive, socialist and democratic values, and expressed our wish to see concrete steps towards addressing the challenges that Europe's and Africa's young people are facing, as set out in this document. The time for empty words and generalisations is over; we now need to seize the initiative and deliver real results.

The challenges acknowledged during our working sessions that formed part of the S&D Group Africa Week 2017 are, to a degree, covered by the five pillars and the eight priority areas of co-operation in the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). Our discussions focused on the most central element – how to ensure that young people are able to play an active role in the political process, particularly when it comes to shaping policy in their individual nations. Other important issues include the lack of access to quality education and the responsiveness of the job market; the inability to get a well-paid job, or a job at all; the legacies of history and colonialism; the cultural and generational clashes in communities; the impact of migration both internally and externally; the role of technology; challenging age-old perceptions and stereotypes through deepened inter-cultural exchanges; and creating a more honest relationship between young people in Africa and in Europe.

¹ The S&D Group is the second largest political group in the European Parliament with 190 Members from all 28 EU Member States.

The selected youth representatives from Africa and Europe for the S&D Group Africa Week 2017,

- Taking into account the demographic boom in Africa and the demographic decline in Europe,
- Taking into account the youth unemployment rates in both Africa and Europe,
- Having regard to Article 26(b) and Article 26(d) of the revised Cotonou Partnership Agreement of 2000,
- Following Articles 11 and 12 of the African Youth Charter of 2006 and Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the EU Strategy for Youth of 2009, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights of 2000, and SDG 16,
- In respect to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- In respect to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000,
- In respect to the African Union Maputo Protocol (Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa) of 2003,
- In respect to the EU Migration Partnership Framework of 2016,
- Having regard to the Joint Communication by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament and the Council for a renewed impetus for the Africa-EU Partnership of May 2017, and the Council conclusions on a renewed impetus for the Africa-EU Partnership June 2017,

- A. Given the issue of unequal distribution of resources in Africa and in Europe;
- B. Given the lack of adequate education on sexual reproductive and health rights, and the difficulties of women to exercise these rights due to cultural and religious beliefs as well as economic and political systems;
- C. Given the persistence of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, early pregnancy and early marriage;
- D. Recognising the fact that women and young people have little or no access to land due to cultural hindrances and lack of collateral guarantee,
- E. Whereas migration is a natural and multifaceted phenomenon which requires legal, safe and secure management;
- F. Recognising that adverse socio-economic conditions and institutional incapacities are important drivers of forced migration;
- G. Recognising that poorly regulated economic globalisation provides an enabling environment for man-made climate change and the forceful displacement of people;
- H. Whereas the current narrative on migration is incoherent with the reality and perpetuates an environment of hate;
- I. Recognising that facilitating free and fair migration requires equitable governance of the relationship between states, markets and society;
- J. Recognising the importance of mainstreaming all policies with due deference to youth engagement;
- K. Whereas our societies continue to undervalue the benefits of technical and vocational training, which may be better suited to the realities of our contemporary societies;
- L. Given that the gender pay gap in Europe and in Africa still needs to be adequately addressed;
- M. Acknowledging the positive efforts of the previous generations and governments of African and European countries to encourage youth involvement in politics and in public discourse;

Recommend that the European Union and the African Union pursue the following action points:

A. Empowering women and the youth to deal with the demographic boom and sexual reproductive health and rights

1. Address the demographic boom in Africa by empowering women and girls through quality education and access to job opportunities in order to become active participants in the labour market, be financially independent, and prevent early child marriage and child labour;
2. Call on the relevant actors, particularly government agencies, to redistribute resources, including access to land for women and youth, which can go some way to accommodate population growth and issues of space;
3. Cooperate with key actors in order to ensure that women in Africa and in Europe are given agency to decide on their sexual and reproductive health; additionally, give them the tools to acquire this agency through appropriate sexual education programmes - together with programmes for educating men on gender equality, sexual reproductive health rights, gender-based violence and gender sensitivity - through technological and other adequate means;
4. Prompt the states in both Africa and Europe to engage in talks with their community and religious group leaders, as key partners, to establish a discourse around sexual and reproductive rights, in particular in communities where these topics and concerns are not addressed;

B. Youth employment and entrepreneurship

5. Address labour mismatches through strategic investment in education, technical and vocational training skills, as well as international educational exchanges, such as the Erasmus programme, and mutual recognition of qualifications;
6. Guarantee that youth civil society are formally included in the development of policy- and decision-making;
7. Encourage the championing of innovative startups, cooperatives, mutuals, associations, foundations and social enterprises for a functional social economy, which recognizes the importance of using new indicators beyond GDP;
8. Recognise the need for the valorisation of rural livelihoods, specifically with regard to the prominent role of agriculture in both the African and European contexts, and the centrality of gender equality to a sustainable political economy;
9. Address the need for the implementation of all gender equality commitments, such as closing the gender pay gap and measures promoting equal access to social protection in order to ensure that the rights of women, including maternity protection, are upheld;

C. Youth involvement in politics and public discourse

10. Establish a committee of young people from Africa and Europe who will ensure that the proposals, articles and declarations cited also in this document are implemented;
11. Demonstrate their commitment to youth engagement in politics and public discourse, by creating a fund destined genuinely and objectively to support the youth involved in governance processes and social projects;
12. Secure the right of young people in the diaspora to vote in elections of their home nation of nationality, at a regional and national level, irrespective of where they live;
13. Enforce a quota system that will increase youth participation and representation in decision-making and address the financial constraints faced by those seeking public office;
14. Design and implement programs that will provide young people with the skills and capacities to participate in politics, policy and decision-making;
15. Provide a platform for intergenerational mentorship, dialogue and opportunities for youth in politics;

16. Combat ageism and sexism in politics and public discourse;
17. Promote and support the formal space for young people to exercise their freedom of expression in order to influence public policy and to participate in democratic processes, while addressing state repression of youth movements and civil organisations;
18. Build on the commitments to develop structures that will promote transparency, good governance as well as facilitate the accountability of elected representatives and public officers including through media and digital platforms;

D. Migration management – Changing the narrative on migration

19. Build the capacity of states to manage the increase in social, cultural and religious diversity resulting from migration through targeted funding to educational and arts-based projects;

Climate change

20. Promote, support and finance the initiatives of youth civil society organizations which address the climatic drivers of forced migration;
21. Create a binding legal framework that will hold multinational corporations accountable for the significant environmental impact of their activities;
22. Increase financing and provide technical expertise for efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, including the creation of a binding legal framework that regulates multinational corporations and holds them accountable, inter alia, on human rights, fair taxation and environmental protection;

Safe, secure and legal migration

23. Recognise the vulnerability of migrants in countries of origin and in transit and host countries; ensure non-discrimination at borders and in detention centres, and further combat human trafficking, while recognising that women and children are particularly affected, through mutual learning by valorizing different countries' best practices, inter alia, on combatting illegal migration;
24. Advocate for the common application of jus soli citizenship for children born to parents that are residing in an EU Member State, including the introduction of a simplified electronic asylum application process in the languages of asylum seekers, while taking into consideration Member States' requirements regarding citizenship;

Socio-economic conditions and institutional incapacities

25. Recognise the urgency of the redistribution of wealth as a means to improving material conditions and building institutional capacity;
26. Involve young people in peace negotiation processes and conflict resolution, and create a broader enabling environment through investments in formal and non-formal education tools in order to promote greater knowledge and increased understanding of democratic values and conflict prevention among young people;
27. Stop the deportation of refugees to countries affected by conflicts and political violence.

We request the President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament to forward this declaration as our message to both European Union and African Union leaders in the run-up to the 5th African Union-EU Summit, in particular to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, the African Union, and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.