



**Joint Statement of the Presidents of COMECE and SECAM,
H.Em. Card. Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ and
H.Em. Card. Philippe Nakellentuba Ouédraogo,
in view of the 6th EU-Africa Summit**



“Justice shall flourish and fullness of peace for ever” (Psalm 72)

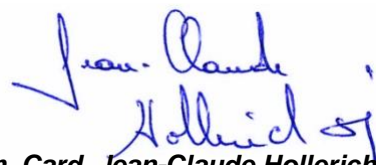
***For a people-centred, just and responsible partnership
between our continents***

The African Union and the European Union are currently preparing for the 6th Summit of their respective political leaders. The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) wish to commend the tireless preparatory efforts of policy-makers on both continents, and to offer some reflections and recommendations in view of the Summit, which have been prepared in joint cooperation between our respective Secretariats based in Accra and Brussels.

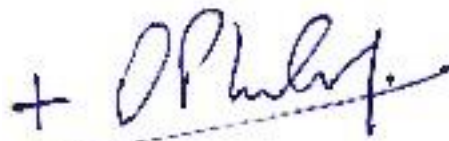
The Catholic Church on both continents shares the concern for the many persons, families and communities, particularly those in situations of vulnerability and weakness, affected by extreme poverty and hunger, persisting lack of an equitable access to basic social services, corruption, violence, terrorist attacks and persecution against vulnerable religious communities, as well as the exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation. Nevertheless, the seeds of hope sown by Saint John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*¹ 25 years ago, still fill us with encouragement and zeal to contribute to addressing these challenges. We believe that the **principles and values of human dignity, solidarity, the preferential option for the poor, the universal destination of goods, the promotion of the integral human development, the responsible stewardship of all Creation, as well as the pursuit of the common good** are necessary guidance and orientation in shaping the respective policy responses and actions.

At a time when our two continents as well as the entire world have been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating consequences, we are firmly convinced that Africa and Europe could become the engines for a reinvigoration of multilateral cooperation by reinforcing their long-standing ties marked by our common roots and geographical proximity. The upcoming AU-EU Summit presents a unique opportunity to shape the intercontinental political and economic relations towards an **equitable and responsible partnership that puts the people at its centre**. In pursuit of the common good on both our continents, we encourage African and European policy-makers to work towards a **partnership for integral human development, integral ecology, human security & peace and for the people on the move**.

It is our hope that the observations and policy recommendations elaborated by our Secretariats may be a constructive contribution to the preparations for the 6th AU-EU Summit. The Church with all her institutional and grassroots actors on both continents stands ready to contribute to the efforts for this Summit, as well as for the future EU-Africa relations. We wish to invoke an abundance of God's blessings upon all those committed to reinforcing the bridge of solidarity and fraternity between our two continents and keep all our people, especially the most helpless, in our prayers.

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President of COMECE

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President of SECAM

¹ Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995), shorturl.at/jDGK5.

Reflections and policy recommendations of the COMECE and SECAM Secretariats in view of the 6th EU-Africa Summit

1. A partnership for **integral human development**

The Catholic Church [favours](#)² the concept of “**integral human development**” – the development of *every person* and of the *whole person*, especially of the poorest, the excluded and the most vulnerable in the society. This, first of all, implies the creation of the necessary conditions for a life in **dignity, justice and peace**. Despite significant improvements over the last years, about 390 million persons still continue to live below the poverty line in Africa and more than 110 million people in the EU live in households at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In line with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)³, we therefore urge African and European policy-makers to **prioritise** common actions allowing **all people** to have unhindered **access to basic social services**, adequate **healthcare, education, nutrition, clean water and sanitation** and **decent housing**.

As Pope Francis said during [one of his apostolic journeys](#)⁴ to the African continent, “*the health of any society depends on the health of its **families***” which are the **foundation of the social edifice**. We support the aspirations of [Africa’s 2063 Agenda](#) on the support for the family and the local community, and urge the AU-EU Summit participants to dedicate a particular attention to fostering the socio-economic conditions for the development of the “*basic cells of our societies*”.

[According to](#) Pope Francis⁵, “*the young are any nation’s most valuable resource. To protect them, to invest in them and to offer them a helping hand, is the best way we can ensure a future worthy of the wisdom and spiritual values dear to their elders, values which are the very heart and soul of a people.*” We acknowledge the significant potential of our **young people and women** to be the drivers of transformative processes in our societies, and we encourage the policy-makers to endorse result-oriented initiatives aiming at **their empowerment at all levels of economic, cultural, community, social and political life**.

In this perspective, comprehensive initiatives on promoting **sustainable investments** as [recently proposed](#) by the European Union⁶, are welcome, as long as they serve to **remove the persisting obstacles to an equitable access to basic social services**, and to enable **human development** in areas reflecting **local needs**, by creating **decent jobs** and offering **fair access to entrepreneurs from both continents**. When promoting entrepreneurial initiatives, local social structures and their key actors should be taken into account. **Family enterprises, cooperatives and small-scale farmers** remain a strong organisational form in the **agricultural sector** of many African countries and their **key role in alleviating hunger** should thus be favoured in future AU-EU investment schemes, including through an **effective access to a fair credit**. Pastoralist populations in Africa are increasingly vulnerable to malnutrition and food insecurity due to the decline in their capacity to adapt to and recover from recurrent crises. Providing **bounded grazing land and water sources**, with **due respect to the ownership and use** of lands by farmers, is [key to reduce their vulnerability](#)⁷.

² Ibid.

³ UN, *Agenda 2030* (2015), [shorturl.at/fmuCG](#).

⁴ Pope Francis, *Homily at the Nairobi University Campus Kenya* (2015), [shorturl.at/fixSW](#) .

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Joint Communication of the European Commission and the European External Action Service, *Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa* (2020), [shorturl.at/tFIZ1](#).

⁷ FAO, *Pastoralism in Africa’s drylands* (2018), [shorturl.at/qrQRU](#).

In order to allow an **inclusive participation** in entrepreneurial and labour processes, the economic investment initiatives should be accompanied by measures fostering **local capacity-building** through quality **education**, technical **formation** and **vocational training for all**, that is, for both boys and girls. A specific **youth initiative** could be adopted which would help to **bridge the gap between the labour market and the education** sector, as well as increase the support for the **employability** and for **entrepreneurship** of young people. This requires African countries to adopt a clear strategy for promoting conditions to create **dignified and stable employment for all** in the long-term.

The use of **digitalisation** and **modern technologies** as [proposed](#) by the European Union, could be introduced in schools and academic institutions to equip young people with the necessary **digital skills**. New technologies may also help to **overcome the rural-urban divide** and bring **significant benefits to citizens** in all areas, such as transportation, communication, healthcare or agriculture. Appropriate precautions, **however**, need to be foreseen in order to minimise the **risks of their potential negative implications** on the world of work, human rights, democracy and security.

As “[trade should benefit people, not just markets and economies](#)”, it needs to be ensured that the opening of local markets to foreign investors accomplished by **stronger regional and intercontinental free trade relations**, duly takes into account the **specific characteristics and needs of societies and domestic economies**, including in the agricultural sector. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its dire consequences, we would particularly like to recall, as [Pope Francis underlined](#)¹⁰, that “*regional free trade treaties dealing with the protection of intellectual property, particularly in the areas of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, should not only maintain intact the powers already granted to States by multilateral agreements, but should also be a means for ensuring a minimum of health care and access to basic treatment for all*”, while **strengthening the resilience against outbreaks of diseases**.

2. A partnership for integral ecology

In his [encyclical *Laudato Si'*](#), Pope Francis [reminds](#)¹¹ us that “*everything is inter-connected*” and that there is a **link** between the **protection of Creation** and the building of a truly **just and equitable social order**. Africa is very rich in human and natural resources, but several of its regions remain economically not developed. The economic systems of many African countries are still affected by **predatory practices** of foreign political and economic actors, taking control of and benefiting from Africa’s natural wealth, while not empowering local economies and communities. **Land-grabbing and the exploitation of natural resources** do not only **exclude local communities from a fair share** in the profit, but it also often leads to **grave human rights violations** and leaves behind **irreparable environmental damage**. Sadly, we are also witnessing cases of some **European business companies becoming accomplices** or remaining indifferent to these abuses by their subcontractors. In this regard, we reiterate our call to **European and international policy-makers** to adopt **binding due diligence legislation** for businesses in order to ensure compliance of their actions throughout the **entire supply chain** with internationally recognised **human and labour rights as well as social and environmental standards**, and to provide **victims** of serious abuses with **fair access to an effective remedy**.

⁸ See FN 6.

⁹ Note of the Holy See, *Ethical Guidelines for International Trade* (2003), [shorturl.at/jtHXZ](#).

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Address at the UN Office in Nairobi, Kenya* (2015), [shorturl.at/ghDJM](#).

¹¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (2015), [shorturl.at/mzCMW](#).

In view of **reducing external overdependency**, a **transition** from an exploitative logic **towards a virtuous** economic dynamic dedicated to **local production** and ensuring a **just and equitable distribution** of resources and profits should be encouraged. This also requires **coherent policy** efforts both in Europe and in Africa, that support the **mobilisation of domestic resource**, such as promotion of **just, transparent and effective taxation policies**, as well as **fighting illicit financial flows** and **corruption** in view of creating a fair economic environment.

By interlinking environmental and social aspects, the concept of integral ecology also implies an **unceasing access for all to sustainable energy**. Price volatility and unequal access to energy resources can have major implications for **human development** and **peace**. The renewed EU-Africa partnership should thus include **creditable provisions** not only on enhancing **energy efficiency** and **reducing the greenhouse gas emissions**, but also on **sustainable and just management of energy resources**, ensuring full energy access in **both urban and rural areas**.

The initiatives [proposed by the European Union](#)¹² on preserving **biodiversity**, enhancing **ocean governance** and investing in **innovative green technologies** are welcome, but further efforts will be required in improving the **climate resilience**, **adaptation** and **mitigation** by way of **capacity-building** and **training**. Above all, we encourage the adoption of policies that will raise public awareness and promote a **change in citizens' consumption patterns** which are still very much dependent on exploitative practices.

3. A partnership for **human security and peace**

Africa is still bleeding in many parts of its territory, and many people are suffering due to non-ending wars, terrorism and other forms of violence. **Security** is essential because it protects **human dignity**¹³. However, true **security** can only exist in **sustainable peace**. The Church [regards](#)¹⁴ **peace** as *"more than the absence of war and violence"*, since it requires *"the establishment of an order which is based on **justice, integral human development, respect for fundamental human rights and the care of Creation**"*.

Following an **integral approach**, the renewed EU-Africa partnership should prioritise the promotion of **human security** – the security of **persons, families and communities** - by stepping up efforts in **pre-emptive peacebuilding**. **Forward-looking, multi-sectoral** and **consistent** actions need to be taken at an **early stage**, where the premises of a possibly violent conflict can be transformed and managed in a sustainable way. In this regard, the EU and the AU should elaborate together a solid framework of **preventive diplomacy and mediation**.

Pope Francis [reminds us](#)¹⁵ that *"it is an absurd contradiction to speak of peace, to negotiate peace, and at the same time, promote or permit the arms trade"*. Reiterating [Pope Francis' recent appeal](#)¹⁶ for a global ceasefire, we call on the EU and its Member States to **stop fuelling conflicts on the African continent** through their often [inconsistent, non-transparent and unaccountable arms exports](#)¹⁷, and to adopt **effective measures against illicit arms trade**. In line with the [African Agenda 2063](#)¹⁸, we support the *Silencing the Guns* [initiative](#)¹⁹ and urge for a **progressive**

¹² See FN 6.

¹³ Cf. COMECE, *Whose Security, Whose Defence?* (2017), [shorturl.at/ekS69](#).

¹⁴ Cf. COMECE, *Europe's Vocation to Promote Peace in the World* (2016), [shorturl.at/jqHY3](#).

¹⁵ Pope Francis, *Prayer Intention for June 2017*, [shorturl.at/wABUV](#).

¹⁶ Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 29 March 2020, [shorturl.at/sHPRV](#).

¹⁷ Cf. European Parliament Resolution of 14 November 2018 on *arms exports*, [shorturl.at/mxzFO](#).

¹⁸ African Union Commission, *Agenda 2063* (2015), [shorturl.at/CY047](#).

¹⁹ African Union's campaign to achieve peace and end conflict, [shorturl.at/ijoY0](#).

disarmament by introducing **adequate restrictions and effective controls** on the **purchase, importation and possession** of arms and light weapons throughout the African continent. We also ask for intensifying the support for a **non-violent and dialogue-centred conflict resolution**, as well as for establishing a [Human Security Index²⁰](#) to monitor progress in building peace.¹

In order to **heal the memories of the past** and also to address **present injustices**, a reinforced focus should be placed on processes of **trust-building** and **reconciliation** between the **two continents**, among **nations** as well as **communities**. In view of **rebuilding communities** and **strengthening the social fabric**, the upcoming AU-EU Summit could support the establishment of platforms and programmes to facilitate an **inclusive encounter and dialogue** involving local and regional actors, including policy-makers, civil society, Churches as well as all ethnic and religious communities. Such initiatives could also contribute to fostering an **enabling democratic environment** and **participatory civic space**. This also implies finding ways to **give a voice to citizens with fewer opportunities**. Failure to **include all parts of society** in political, social and economic processes might fuel support for polarising voices and provide breeding ground for extremism.

An important element in the **recovery from past crises** and **preparation for possible future challenges and risks** is the fostering of **resilience of persons, families and local communities** through education and capacity-building. Following a bottom-up approach, efforts should also be undertaken to foster the **resilience of societies and democratic state institutions**, including measures addressing cyber threats, disinformation and external dependencies.

An essential ingredient of a resilient state and society is the **respect for internationally recognised human rights and freedoms**. If detached from internationally recognised human rights and from **the rule of law**, security measures can lose their positive value and they might even become a threat in themselves. Closer cooperation in areas such as **good governance, accountability, fight against corruption and organised crime**, as well as enhancing **transparency of public finances** and **effectiveness of public administration**, and strengthening the **independence of the judiciary**, should be envisaged in the future EU-AU partnership framework. This cooperation could be extended to track down ill-gotten wealth. On the other hand, however, in order to avoid "*new forms of colonisation*"²¹, EU actions should **abstain from promoting concepts and practices** which are not in line with **internationally recognised human rights and dignity**, and that **contradict the identity, religious beliefs, culture, traditions, values and life** of local communities in African partner countries. In this regard, we recall the [words of Pope Francis²²](#) who underlined that "*an economic globalisation, whose limitations are increasingly evident, should not lead to cultural uniformity. If we participate in a process respectful of local values and ways of life and of the expectations of citizens, we will ensure that [...] the people itself will progressively take charge and become the artisan of its own future.*"

We would also wish to appeal to African and European policy-makers to ensure the **fundamental right to religious freedom** by protecting and promoting the **rights of all ethnic and religious components** present in our continents, whether they are **majorities or minorities**, on the basis of the [concept of common, equal and full citizenship²³](#). **Public authorities** have a **major responsibility to protect** their own citizens, in particular when they are targeted and persecuted.

²⁰ Proposal for an African Human Security Index, [shorturl.at/imwXY](#).

²¹ Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of new year greetings (2018), [shorturl.at/qEM58](#).

²² Pope Francis, *meeting with the authorities, civil society and the diplomatic corps, Antananarivo* (2019), [shorturl.at/bsP46](#).

²³ Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, *Document on Human Fraternity* (2019), [shorturl.at/gDFZ0](#).

In some countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, **Christians and members of certain other vulnerable religious communities** are suffering from **terrorist attacks, crimes against humanity, war crimes**, and even on-going **genocidal acts**. Pope Francis [has urged](#) “*the international community to support the efforts made by these countries to eliminate the scourge of terrorism that is causing more and more bloodshed in whole parts of Africa, as in other parts of the world.*” **Perpetrators** of these crimes should be **brought to justice** and the **victims** should receive **full support** of their respective governments and societies.

4. A partnership for **people on the move**

In many parts of the African continent **people suffer** from the **devastating consequences** of social and economic under-development, caused by persistent wars and violence, bloody persecution and oppression, outrageous corruption and exploitation, and changes in climate that affect the daily life of communities. In accordance with [UNHCR](#), almost 22 million persons feel forced to move, inside their home countries, or from one African country to another inside the continent, fleeing persecution or looking for better economic prospects. Hundreds of thousands take the risky direction to Europe or elsewhere, and many of them tragically die at sea: “**We cannot allow the Mediterranean to become a vast cemetery!**”, Pope Francis [urged](#)²⁴ decision-makers in his address to the European Parliament. Migrants and asylum seekers become, not infrequently, **victims** of the profitable but **criminal activity of trafficking in human beings**, either in countries of transit or destination.

The **root causes** of these forced migratory influxes of persons, many of them in highly vulnerable situations, must be faced with **courage and realism**, in particular by public authorities involved, whose main concern should be the well-being of their people, individuals and families, in order to make real **their inalienable right to remain in their home country** to live in **security and dignity**. **States’ obligations** derived from the international legal framework that protect refugees should be **upheld and fulfilled by public authorities**, and **implemented in a humane way**. In light of the challenges of contemporary migratory movements, Pope Francis [said](#)²⁵ that “*the only reasonable response is one of **solidarity and mercy**... an equitable distribution of **responsibilities**, an **honest and sincere assessment** of the alternatives and a **prudent management**.” [Welcoming migrants and their families with generosity](#)²⁶, protecting their rights and dignity, promoting and integrating them into hosting societies will contribute to the integral human development of both, migrants and receiving communities.*

Furthermore, those who feel forced to leave their homeland, should be entitled to return as soon as the necessary conditions for their wellbeing are met. Public authorities and the international community [have the responsibility](#)²⁷ “**to facilitate their return and ensure adequate measures of protection and respect for their rights**”, as well as receive **adequate assistance** for their **reintegration** in their home communities.

5. A partnership with **Churches and faith-based organisations**

In African societies, **religion and culture** are **deeply rooted in local realities** and they are one of the key determinants of **community and personal bonds**. In line with Africa’s [Agenda 2063](#)²⁸,

²⁴ Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of new year greetings (2020), [shorturl.at/aCGOV](#).

²⁵ Pope Francis, *Homily at the Holy Mass for Migrants* (2018), [shorturl.at/yH379](#).

²⁶ Message Pope Francis for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018, [shorturl.at/ezPS3](#).

²⁷ H.Em. Card. Pietro Parolin, *Address at the ACN’s Conference “Return to the Roots”* (2017), [shorturl.at/jorty](#).

²⁸ See FN 18.

we thus encourage African and European policy-makers to ensure that **religious and cultural diversity** be respected, preserved and promoted as a **source of strength, trust and mutual enrichment**.

Religious heritage is one of the pillars of culture and identity. The renewed AU-EU partnership could thus better recognise the spiritual, historical, artistic, economic as well as social contribution of **religious heritage** as a positive and vivid driving force, and reinforce policies aiming at its **promotion and protection**, particularly **in conflict areas**. Such initiatives would not only improve the **respective religious and cultural literacy**, but they could also foster a **spirit of encounter, dialogue and better mutual knowledge and understanding**.

As [recently recognised](#)²⁹ by the European Parliament, **Churches and faith-based organisations** are among the **frontline and long-standing** actors for **sustainable human development and peace**. The future AU-EU policy framework could therefore foresee ways of **strengthening partnerships with religious actors** in areas, such as access to basic social services, including education and healthcare, and others, such as peace-building, mediation, reconciliation and humanitarian action, through a **better integration** of their efforts within the specific policies, including an impartial **and non-discriminatory access to** respective **funding** instruments.

Inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue can be powerful instruments to build bridges and **foster social cohesion**. In this respect, we encourage policy-makers on both continents to adopt policies contributing to a **favourable environment** and **supporting inclusive inter-religious encounters and actions, while respecting the different ethos of religious actors**. Such initiatives could, for instance, be linked to the recently launched EU platform on “[Global Exchange on Religion in Society](#)”³⁰.

In preparation of **future AU-EU Summits**, **regular dialogue meetings between political and religious authorities** from both continents could be set up, in order to **maximise the potential of their cooperation** for a **people-centred, just and responsible Africa-Europe partnership**.

²⁹ European Parliament resolution of 3 October 2017 on *addressing shrinking civil society space in developing countries*, shorturl.at/flNST.

³⁰ European External Action Service, *Global Exchange on Religion in Society*, shorturl.at/jvCH4.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A partnership for integral human development

- prioritise common actions allowing **all people** to have unhindered **access to basic social services**, adequate **healthcare**, **education**, **nutrition**, **clean water** and **sanitation**, as well as **decent housing**
- foster the **socio-economic conditions** for the development of **families** as the foundations of the social edifice
- acknowledge the significant potential of **young people and women** to be the drivers of transformative processes, and endorse **credible** initiatives aiming at **their empowerment at all levels of economic, cultural, community, social and political life**
- promote **sustainable investments** as an instrument to **remove the persisting obstacles to an equitable access to basic social services**, and to enable **human development** in areas reflecting **local needs**, by creating **decent jobs** and offering **unprejudiced access to entrepreneurs from both continents**
- recognise the **key role of family enterprises, cooperatives and small-scale farmers in alleviating hunger**, and favour them in future AU-EU investment schemes, including through an **effective access to a fair credit; provide bounded grazing land and water sources**, in order to reduce their vulnerability and avert indiscriminate movement of herds and open grazing
- foster **local capacity-building** through **quality education, technical formation and vocational training for all**, that is, for both boys and girls
- adopt a specific **youth initiative to bridge the gap between the labour market and the education sector**, as well as to support the **employability** and the **entrepreneurship** of young people
- adopt a **long-term strategy** for promoting conditions to create **dignified and stable employment for all**
- support the use of **digitalisation** and **modern technologies** in schools and academic institutions to equip young people with the necessary **digital skills**
- support the establishment of **schools and health institutions in rural areas**, equipped with functional **modern facilities and personnel**
- promote the application of new technologies to **overcome the rural-urban divide** and to bring **significant benefits to citizens** in areas such as transportation, communication, healthcare or agriculture, while foreseeing appropriate precautions in order to **minimise the risks of their potential negative implications** on the world of work, human rights, democracy and security
- regional free trade treaties dealing with the protection of intellectual property, particularly in the areas of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, should not only maintain intact the powers already granted to States by multilateral agreements, but they should also be a means for **ensuring a minimum of health care and access to basic treatment for all**, while **strengthening the resilience against outbreaks of diseases**
- ensure the **return of misappropriated funds from Africa** stashed in European banks and their **usage for the common good**

2. A partnership for integral ecology

- encourage a **transition** from an exploitative logic **towards a virtuous** economic dynamic dedicated to **local production** and ensuring **equitable distribution** of resources and profits, in order to **reduce external overdependencies**

- promote an **equitable access to natural resources** and thus combat inequality and poverty
- encourage that **political and economic sectors** promote an **inclusive and sustainable** approach which takes into consideration the **dignity of every human person** and the **common good**
- adopt **binding due diligence legislation** for businesses at European and international levels in order to ensure compliance of their actions throughout the **entire supply chain** with **human and labour rights, as well as social and environmental standards**, and to provide **victims** of serious abuses with **access to an effective remedy**
- strengthen **policy coherence**, in particular, between development, humanitarian, trade, investment, agricultural, migration and security policies
- increase support for the **domestic resource mobilisation**, such as promotion of **just, transparent and effective taxation policies**, as well as **fighting illicit financial flows and corruption** in view of creating a **fair economic environment**
- include in the future AU-EU partnership **creditable provisions** not only on enhancing **energy efficiency** and **reducing the greenhouse gas emissions**, but also on **sustainable and just management of energy resources**, ensuring **unceasing energy access for all** in **both urban and rural areas**
- promote the preservation of **biodiversity**, enhanced **ocean governance** and investment in **innovative green technologies**, while supporting efforts to improve the **climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation** by way of **capacity-building and training**
- adopt policies that will raise public awareness and promote a **change in citizens' consumption patterns** which are still very much dependent on exploitative practices

3. A partnership for human security and peace

- following an **integral approach**, prioritise the promotion of **human security** – the security of **persons and property, families and communities** - by stepping up efforts in **pre-emptive peacebuilding**; in this regard, envisage **forward-looking, multi-sectoral and consistent** actions at an **early stage**, where the premises of a possibly violent conflict can be transformed and managed in a sustainable way
- elaborate a solid joint framework of **preventive diplomacy and mediation**
- **stop fuelling conflicts on the African continent** through often [inconsistent, non-transparent and unaccountable European arms exports](#), and adopt **effective measures against illicit arms trade**
- in line with the [African Agenda 2063](#), support the *Silencing the Guns* [initiative](#) and work for a **progressive disarmament** by introducing **adequate restrictions and effective controls** on the **purchase, importation and possession** of arms and light weapons throughout the African continent
- intensify the support for a **non-violent and dialogue-centred conflict resolution**, as well as for establishing a [Human Security Index](#) to monitor progress in building peace
- in order to **heal the memories of the past** and also to address **present injustices**, place a reinforced focus on processes of **trust-building and reconciliation** between the **two continents**, among **nations** as well as **communities**; support the establishment of platforms and programmes to facilitate an **inclusive encounter and dialogue** involving local and regional actors, including policy-makers, civil society, Churches as well as ethnic and religious communities
- contribute to fostering an **enabling democratic environment** and **participatory civic space**, while **giving a voice to citizens with fewer opportunities**

- strengthen the **resilience of persons, families and local communities** through quality education and capacity-building; following a **bottom-up approach**, also undertake efforts to foster the **resilience of societies and democratic state institutions**, including measures addressing cyber threats, disinformation and external dependencies
- intensify cooperation in areas, such as the promotion of internationally recognised **human rights, the rule of law, good governance, the fight against corruption and organised crime**, as well as the enhancement of **transparency of public finances and effectiveness of public administration**, and of the **independence of the judiciary**
- avoid “*new forms of colonisation*” and **abstain from promoting concepts and practices** which are not in line with **internationally recognised human rights and dignity**, and that **contradict the identity, religious beliefs, culture, traditions, values and life** of local communities in African partner countries
- ensure the **fundamental right to religious freedom** by protecting and promoting the **rights of all ethnic and religious components** present in both continents, whether they are **majorities or minorities**, on the basis of the [concept of common, equal and full citizenship](#)
- step-up the protection of **Christians and members of other vulnerable religious communities** who are suffering from **terrorist attacks, crimes against humanity, war crimes**, and even on-going **genocidal acts**; bring the **perpetrators** of these crimes to justice and grant the **victims full access to material and spiritual support**

4. A partnership for **people on the move**

- since migrants and asylum seekers often become victims of the profitable but **criminal activity of trafficking in human beings**, either in countries of transit or destination, take bold counter-measures, ensure the **accountability of perpetrators** and provide **assistance to the victims**
- address the **root causes of forced migratory influxes of persons**, many of them in **highly vulnerable situations**, with courage and realism, in particular by public authorities involved, whose **main concern** should be the **well-being of their people, individuals and families**, in order to make real their **inalienable right to remain in their home country** to live in **security and dignity**
- **welcoming migrants and their families** with generosity, protecting their rights and dignity, promoting and integrating them into hosting societies; this will contribute to the integral human development of both, migrants and receiving communities
- uphold and fulfil **States’ obligations** derived from the **international legal framework** that protect refugees, and **implement** them in a **humane way**
- grant those who are forced to leave their homeland, the possibility of **return as soon as the necessary conditions** for their wellbeing are met; in this regard, facilitate their return and ensure **adequate measures of protection and respect for their rights**, as well as **adequate assistance for their reintegration** in their home communities

5. A partnership **with Churches and faith-based organisations**

- ensure that **religious and cultural diversity** be respected, preserved and promoted as a **source of strength, trust and mutual enrichment**; promote **religious and cultural literacy** in view of enhancing mutual knowledge and understanding
- profoundly **recognise** the spiritual, historical, artistic, economic as well as social contribution of **religious heritage** and reinforce policies aiming at its **promotion and protection**, particularly **in conflict areas**
- strengthen **partnerships with Churches and faith-based organisations** as the **frontline and long-standing** actors for **sustainable human development and peace** in the access to basic social services (education and healthcare), as well as in peace-building, mediation, reconciliation and humanitarian action; **better integrate** such efforts within the specific

policies, including by means of a **fair and non-discriminatory access to** respective **funding instruments**

- adopt policies contributing to a **favourable environment** for **inclusive inter-religious encounters and actions**, while **respecting the respective ethos of religious actors**; such initiatives could, for instance, be linked to the recently launched EU platform on “[Global Exchange on Religion in Society](#)”
- in preparation of **future AU-EU Summits**, set up **regular dialogue meetings between political and religious authorities** from both continents, in order to **maximise the potential of their cooperation** for a **people-centred, objective and responsible Africa-Europe partnership**

Brussels/Accra, 10 June 2020

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