

AFRICA - EUROPE ALTERNATIVES

Towards Peoples Alternatives in Africa and Europe

Lisbon, 7-9 december 2007

Monday 24 December 2007, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 9 December 2007).

We, civil society activists engaged in a wide range of peoples' movements and organisations in Africa and Europe met in Lisbon from 7-9 December 2007 to express our opposition and resistance to the neoliberal free trade and investment policies that European and African governments are implementing in our countries, and which they propose as a framework for the "Africa- EU Strategic Partnership". While the leaders of two continents gathered in Lisbon to decide the future of Africa, we came together to further the social and political dialogue among our peoples because we defend our right to resist concretely and to propose alternatives, and we are confident of our capacity to put them into practice.

Both African and European participants noted the historical and contemporary role of European governments and corporations in Africa, and stressed that Europe constitutes the most direct source of threats and pressures on the peoples of Africa. We consider that the EU-AU Strategic Partnership represents a consistent and immediate threat for Africa and reject its principles and action plan. We also denounce the European visa policies which prevented many men and women involved in African social movements from being present in Lisbon to participate in our discussions about alternatives. We dedicate this statement to them.

During our wide-ranging exchanges of information and intense discussions on the four main areas of common concern we identified many crucial issues in the respective areas amongst which we prioritised the following key proposals.

On Economic development

Taking advantage of the external indebtedness of most African countries, European governments - acting in the IMF, the WB and more recently the WTO - have imposed radical structural adjustment programs on them. After more than two decades of trade liberalisation and the determined promotion of export-oriented economies, the liberalization of capital markets, the promotion of foreign investment, and the privatisation of public services in African countries, the negative effects are clearly evident and underpin our opposition to such policies and institutions. Most recently African (and Caribbean and Pacific) countries have been confronted with the reinforcement of such policies through the European Union's proposed Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

In this context, we demand that

- European governments end their imposition of destructive economic policies on African countries

through the institutions of the IMF, WB, WTO and bilateral trade agreements

- European governments and banks immediately cancel the external African debt, and recognize their ecological and social debt towards Africa
- The European Commission stops exerting pressure on African governments and withdraws their EPAs demands
- The African governments resist these pressures by refusing to sign EPAs
- European transnational corporations stop their predatory extraction of Africa's resources, destruction of the environment and ecological equilibrium and the exploitation of her peoples

We call upon European citizens to reject the so-called Reform Treaty which reinforces the power of the European Commission in matters of trade and development and further reduces the capacity of citizens to influence democratically its policies.

On Food Sovereignty, agriculture and natural resources

We embrace the principle of food sovereignty which peoples' movements throughout the world are building as an alternative to the neo-liberal model of corporate-controlled industrial agriculture and food production. Among the threats to communities' rights to food and to produce food we denounce the following above all and we commit ourselves to fight jointly against them:

- Liberalization of agriculture and trade through instruments such as structural adjustment, the neo-liberal reform of CAP, EPAs and the WTO Agreement on Agriculture
- The annulment of African states' policy space to support their agricultures and protect their regional markets
- Policies that promote the privatization of seeds and biodiversity, propagate GMOs and the concept of intellectual property rights promoted by European and other corporations
- The creation of a global market of agrofuels pushed by measures like the EU biofuel targets and subsidies for their production
- Land use policies that favour corporations over farmers and future generations and
- Strategies for African agricultural development dominated by donors acting in arenas like the EU and the OECD
- We defend the right of both African and European countries to support small scale farmers with public funds, provided that this support does not negatively affect other farmers outside their respective countries and regions.

On human rights

We denounce the support provided by EU to authoritarian and dictatorial regimes in Africa and the violations of human rights and the breaches of democracy that are frequent in Africa as well as in Europe. Conventions and guidelines exist but remain on paper. We call on all states of Africa and Europe and their regional organisations to serve democracy and human rights especially through the

following commitments:

- Support the development of a democratic culture particularly through transparent and credible electoral processes, with strong participation of civil society at all stages, from civic education up to the supervision of elections; in this perspective we condemn the responsibility of European Member states in international arms trade
- Regulate, by implementing legally binding laws, transnational corporations (TNCs), particularly those active in the extractive industries, to end violations of human rights and involvement in local and regional conflicts and to make all TNCs accountable in their home countries for their criminal misconduct abroad
- Give more space to countervailing powers like civil society organisations and alternative media, for example by involving them in mediation of peace processes
- Strengthen democratization, through reinforcing the role of the Parliaments, including the European Parliament, and promote transparent and coherent policy making, and make political institutions, including the EU institutions, accountable to citizens
- Advance the human rights agenda especially the rights of women and their sexual and reproductive rights ; we reject gender violence, forced marriages and other practises that are violations of human rights and are killing thousands of women and girls every year
- Promote freedom of expression and media; promote the African Human Rights Court and other institutions like human rights commissions at the national and regional level and the access of civil society to them
- Reclaim the right to food, education, health and other basic services from the IFIs, WTO and bilateral or regional free trade agreement agendas

On Migration

Considering that:

- the current migration policies are driven by security concerns and the exploitation of human beings, criminalize migrants and threaten their human and social rights both in Europe and Africa
- Mass emigration is largely the result of European policies which close off all other opportunities for Africans, denying them economic, social and cultural rights, especially the right to food
- That the actual racist migration policies do not take in account the real needs of European and African societies and undermine the sustainable development perspectives in both Europe and Africa

We reject:

- The externalization of borders policy of the European Union which is imposed on the African governments for implementation
- The policy of detention, expulsion and deportation and the readmission agreements
- The Frontex Program, which represents a huge investment in the militarization of borders control creating the basis for direct interventions in African countries and represents a real declaration of

war against migrants

- All the measures and policies which promote exclusively temporary migration but systematize brain drain
- All the economic policies and free trade agreements restructuring local economies, increasing social inequalities and destroying livelihoods and jobs

We demand that:

- All migration policies be based on the recognition of the fundamental human rights and labour rights guaranteed in UN and ILO instruments and protocols, including the freedom of movement, and recognition, with asylum rights, of hunger and environmental refugees
- All the European governments ratify and implement the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and fully implement the right to asylum
- The recognition of the fundamental rights, including health, education, housing etc. for “sans-papiers” in both Europe and Africa, and their unconditional regularization

These concerns and aspirations bring us together in Lisbon. We commit ourselves to strengthen interregional solidarity and cooperation among our social movements and organisations from Africa and Europe. We commit ourselves to joint resistance against neoliberal policies and to build people centred alternatives. In particular we continue to campaign together to

- Stop the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)
- Stop the Global Europe Strategy
- Support the Moratorium on Agrofuels
- Achieve freedom of movement for all people

We will work towards new strategies for economic development based on solidarity, complementarity, peace and the realization of all human rights for peoples in Africa and Europe. We will use moments in the political calendar of African and European movements such as

- The Global Day of Action of the World Social Forum on 26 January 2008
- The UNCTAD XII meeting (Accra, April 2008)
- The proposed conference on Global Europe and the EU FTAs (Brussels, April 2008)
- The 5th European Social Forum (Malmo, September 2008)
- The Migration WSF (Madrid, September 2008)

to link our initiatives, build our alliances and create the conditions for a just world and for the ecological stability of our common global home.

Lisbon

December 9th 2007