

Position paper**Caritas Europa's vision for a renewed partnership
between the EU and ACP countries:
An opportunity to deliver on Agenda 2030**

As the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, which serves as a framework for the relations between the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states, comes to an end in 2020, the EU and the ACP countries have begun negotiating a new successor agreement. Expected to enter into force in 2020, the new agreement between the two blocks will be of paramount importance, as it is likely to shape the character of political, social and economic relations between 106 countries across four different continents for the years to come. The new EU-ACP agreement therefore has the potential to contribute to a sustainable future for more than 1.5 billion people.

Caritas Europa's vision for a renewed EU-ACP partnership builds on the long-standing experience of the global Caritas network in implementing development projects in partnership with local communities and in working with migrant communities. Caritas organisations are committed to ensuring that especially the furthest behind can thrive and live a dignified life.

A partnership to implement Agenda 2030 and the SDGs

In 2015 world leaders committed to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The negotiations for a post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement are thus taking place at a very crucial moment: the decisions taken today will have a tremendous impact on the ability of the EU and ACP countries to **fully implement the SDGs and Agenda 2030** in the next decade. In order to achieve this objective, including through the new EU-ACP partnership, both parties will have to mobilise both strong political will and adequate financial resources.

Countries across the globe are falling short of their commitment to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030.¹ The new partnership should therefore identify **the eradication of poverty in its multi-dimensional nature as a core objective shared by both the EU and the ACP countries.** Eradicating extreme poverty requires joint efforts to tackle the root causes that contribute to the perpetuation of this condition, such as hunger and food and nutrition insecurity, lack of basic health and social services, lack of access to quality education, among others.

There is a growing consensus on the fact that the benefits of economic growth have been shared unevenly across regions and countries. Despite overall progress in the fight against extreme poverty, certain areas and communities remain excluded from social and economic advances and risk being left behind.² For these reasons, the successor to the Cotonou agreement can be a stepping stone to a **renewed effort in the fight against social and economic inequalities.** In order to achieve that, the EU's development policies will need to be focused on the most vulnerable people and those furthest behind.

¹ The proportion of the population in extreme poverty has fallen from 36% in 1990 to around 8% in 2018. But at the current pace we will not eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. At the current trajectory, we will still have about 6% of the global population – double the agreed target of 3% – and about 400-475 million people living in extreme poverty in 2030.

Source: ODI, 2018. "New projections show extreme poverty is falling – but not fast enough" <https://bit.ly/2P0VsXw>

² World Bank, 2018. "Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle" <https://bit.ly/2CUn0fI>

For the same reasons, **the future EU-ACP partnership should not be seen only through the lenses of trade and investments**, as both negotiating mandates seem to suggest. Rather, the new agreement can be an opportunity to ensure that, when engaging the private sector, **priority is given to interventions that can prove a clear development added value**, and which have high impact on long-term sustainable development and poverty eradication. **Clear safeguards, guidelines and criteria need to be set when engaging with private sector actors** in developing contexts, so as to guide decisions on project eligibility and impact assessments. The new partnership should prioritise the support to local micro-, small- and medium-sized businesses as well as to social enterprises, since they tend to maximise social inclusion and societal benefits rather than just profit.

More generally, an effective strategy to tackle the root causes of poverty and social and economic inequalities will require the **commitment of both parties to integral human development**,³ placing the human person at the centre of the development process, upholding equality of rights of all people in their communities, and promoting the dignity of the human person. This can only be achieved by embedding in the new EU-ACP partnership a political and legal commitment to **implement the Agenda 2030 in its entirety**. In order to ensure that different sets of policies (trade, finance, environment and climate change, food security, migration, security) are in line with and contribute to the implementation of the Agenda 2030, the future agreement will also need to refer to fully respecting the legally binding principle of **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and include effective accountability mechanisms**.

The EU and the ACP states should also use the opportunity of this privileged partnership to strengthen their cooperation on the global stage. We call on both parties to build a **true partnership of equals** that takes into account different needs, development priorities and interests. Both the EU and the ACP states will highly benefit from anchoring the future agreement in shared fundamental values: we believe that the key principles of **solidarity, democracy, equality, social justice, as well as respect of human dignity and human rights** should provide the foundation for a renewed, stronger partnership.

The aspirations of the people in both regions can help shape an inclusive future partnership. For this reason, when negotiating and implementing the upcoming agreement, **the contribution of civil society actors should be fully taken into account and citizens' engagement should be promoted**. At a time of shrinking civic space,⁴ the new partnership can be an effective tool to recognise and promote the different important roles that civil society organisations (CSOs) can play, including: as service providers, policy advocates, human rights defenders or sustainable development actors, just to name a few. In order to allow for meaningful participation of civil society actors, particularly of those most rooted in local communities and realities, CSO recognition needs to be translated into concrete provisions and mechanisms, backed by adequate financial means, detailing how CSO's political engagement will be supported in the future partnership.

³ Caritas Europa promotes the concept of integral human development. It may be defined as an all-embracing approach that takes into consideration the well-being of the person, and of all people, in their different dimensions: economic, social, political, cultural, ecological and the spiritual dimension. For more information, see:

Caritas Europa, 2010. "A Reflection on the dynamics between Migration and Development" <https://bit.ly/2Gj61WU>

⁴ The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, in his 2018 report, underlines "worrying patterns of the closing of civic space around the globe that have resulted in serious limitations on the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association".

Source: United Nations, 2018. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association" <https://bit.ly/2Lahbw4>

What role for migration in the new partnership?

Over the last few years, **migration has become a deeply contentious issue in Europe and has impacted political relations with neighbouring countries** and (in particular) the African continent. The politicisation of migration is also evident in the discussions over the new EU-ACP partnership, where the widely divergent needs and priorities of the two parties threaten to derail negotiations altogether. Key points of contention appear to be: on the European side, the request for a stronger engagement in stemming irregular migration, facilitating (forced) returns and reinforcing border control; on the ACP side, the demand to recognise the positive effects of migration and to open more safe and regular channels of migration. More in general, both parties have framed the new EU-ACP partnership as an opportunity to tackle the ‘root causes of migration’.⁵

Caritas Europa believes that the new EU-ACP partnership, rather than focusing on tackling the drivers of migration, should rather provide the opportunity to **tackle the root causes of poverty, conflict, injustice and inequality in order to ensure that everyone – regardless of migratory status - has access to a dignified life**. Development aid should not be allocated on the basis of the EU’s interest on migration, nor should it be made conditional on the cooperation of ACP countries on forced return and readmission. Rather, **development aid resources should be directed to the countries and areas that need them the most**, and their impact should not be measured against their effectiveness in reducing migration.

However, we also believe that **migration can play a positive role in development processes**, including in regions of origin, transit and destination. For this reason, we call on EU and ACP countries to use this new partnership as an opportunity not only to recognise **migration as a dynamic and mutually beneficial process, but also to facilitate and maximise the benefits that migration can bring to the EU and its partner countries** in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Migrants contribute to the economic, social, cultural and political life of the places where they settle. In order to recognise and maximise such contributions, **expanded safe and regular migration channels between Europe and ACP countries are needed**. Such a strategy would also have the effect of reducing irregular migration and migrant deaths, while reducing the incidence and influence of smugglers and traffickers.

Regional migration within ACP countries has long been a crucial coping strategy for communities living in insecure or unstable environments, such as in the Sahel.⁶ **Regional mobility should thus be encouraged and facilitated at all levels in the framework of the new partnership. Migrants and diaspora can also be an important driving force** in the development of their countries of origin, both through the transfer of skills, knowledge and ideas and through financial support, such as remittances and direct investment. Such a contribution should be recognised and supported in the context of the new EU-ACP partnership.

The EU and ACP countries should therefore commit to **facilitating safe and responsible migration, to protecting and fully respecting the human rights of all migrants**, regardless of their migration and administrative status, and to **promoting migrants’ meaningful contribution to their countries of origin, transit and destination**. In order to achieve such objectives, the new partnership should be grounded in relevant political and legal frameworks, including the **Agenda 2030**, the recently adopted

⁵ Friedrich Erbert Stiftung, 2018. “Migration in the EU-ACP Partnership After 2020: Implementing the UN Global Compact” <https://bit.ly/2SKYJg0>

⁶ Currently, the majority of migration movements are taking place between developing countries: for example, despite what is commonly assumed, more than 80% of African migration occurs within the African continent. See: IOM, 2017 <https://bit.ly/2A1LJ2e>

Global Compact for Migration (GCM) as well as existing international legal frameworks on human rights and refugee protection. In addition to civil society actors, migrant and diaspora groups should also be empowered to contribute to the negotiation process.

Caritas Europa's vision for a renewed partnership

In order to ensure that the future EU-ACP contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030, Caritas Europa outlines the following recommendations:

- The implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals** should be clearly stated as the primary objective of the renewed partnership, in particular by embedding the principles of **Agenda 2030** in the future agreement.
- The future agreement must seek to **eradicate extreme poverty**, addressing the root causes that are at the basis of its multi-dimensional nature, and that contribute to the **fight against inequalities**, as well as to the **full realisation of human rights**.
- **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development** should be clearly included in the future agreement as an obligation bound by all parties. In addition, transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be established to ensure the respect of this obligation, allowing the full participation of civil society throughout the process.
- The future agreement should be built around the commitment to respect a set of key principles: **solidarity, democracy, equality, social justice, respect of human dignity and human rights**.
- The **important role of civil society should be recognised** within the new partnership, with the acknowledgement of its multiple positive contributions. The future agreement should envisage the establishment of **concrete mechanisms to engage CSOs**, to involve them throughout the political dialogue and during the process of planning, monitoring and evaluation of implementation plans. These mechanisms should be backed by adequate financial provisions.
- The new partnership needs to ensure that, when promoting private sector engagement, **investments must prove a clear added value in terms of sustainable development**, prioritising local micro, small and medium business and social enterprises.

On the role of migration within the future partnership:

- **Development aid should not be used to serve the EU's own interests**, as an incentive tool to force ACP countries' cooperation in the field of migration containment. It should rather be used to **tackle the root causes of poverty and structural inequalities**.
- The new agreement must **exclude the use of any kind of positive or negative incentives**, such as the use of trade or development policies, **to force the cooperation of ACP countries on the returning of migrants**. **Voluntary returns should always prevail over forced returns** and should ensure proper reintegration in the country of return.
- The new agreement should **recognise and maximise the benefits that migration can bring to both EU and ACP countries**. This shall be done by: safeguarding the human dignity and basic human rights of all migrants, regardless of their administrative status; expanding safe and regular channels of migration between EU and ACP states; promoting and protecting regional mobility; and facilitating diaspora engagement in transnational development cooperation. Civil society actors, migrant and diaspora groups should also be empowered to contribute to the negotiation process.
- **The new agreement should be rooted in relevant international political and legal frameworks**, including the **Agenda 2030**, the **Global Compact for Migration (GCM)** as well as existing international legal frameworks on human rights and refugee protection.



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