



**Protocol of the Afrika Club meeting, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 18:30 - 20:30  
Zentrum für Internationale Entwicklung, Sensengasse 3, 1090 Wien**

## **2020: A turning point for EU Africa relations?**

### **With inputs from:**

- **Celine Fabrequette**, head of Project and Communication for African Diaspora Youth Forum in Europe (ADYFE)
- **Andreas Melan**, head of Africa Department, Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA)
- **Georg Lennkh**, former head of the Austrian Development Cooperation and special Africa envoy
- **Johnny Pitswane**, minister at the South African Embassy (South Africa took over the AU Chair 2020)

Moderator: **Rita Isiba**, founder of [Aphropean Partners](#)

Protocol: **Adjima Tondji Niat**; Editor: **Franz Schmidjell**

Past protocols: <http://www.vidc.org/themen/afrika/afrika-club/protokolle/>

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[African Diaspora within the European African relations](#)

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[Inequality. A Challenge for African-European Cooperation - Conference Conclusions](#)

The Afrika Club is a joint initiative of Radio Afrika TV (RATV), the Association of African Students in Austria (VAS Österreich), the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC) and Ambassador Georg Lennkh.

**Franz Schmidjell (VIDC)** welcomes participants, introduces the Africa Club and outlines its purpose: to bring together the different perspectives and views of the African diaspora, public institutions and Austrian civil society, including academia.

The topic was chosen because 2020 will be the “Africa year” of the EU. It could be the chance for a new partnership and new associations between Europe and Africa. The objectives of today’s Africa Club are:

- 1) To get a better inside through a brief input on the history of African and European relations.
  - 2) To be up-dated about current developments with regards to the Cotonou negotiations, the upcoming EU-AU summit in Brussels and the new African strategy of the EU.
  - 3) Exchange about what debates will or should take place in Austria this year.
- He introduces the moderator and thanks her.

**Rita Isiba:** Will 2020 be the year of improvement between Africa and Europe relations, in the context of the upcoming EU/AU summit planned for October in Brussels? She states that during this discussion active participation will be important for the round table and that there will be three discussion rounds, each one followed by a Q/A round. She also asks the participants to stay after the meeting for a nice group picture and some networking. Rita Isiba introduces the panelists. She presents the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) and asks Mr. Lennkh for an historical overview in context of the upcoming Brussels summit.

**Georg Lennkh** jokes about the fact that every two to three years we seem to find ourselves at a turning point in African/European relations. In his overview he states that there were in fact more turning points in the past. After 1989, the end of the Cold War was followed by a wave of democratization on the African continent. Africa took over more responsibilities, e.g. for military missions: African problems and conflicts should be resolved by Africa. At the beginning of the post cold war era, there was need for a new agreement. Cotonou started to talk about political conditionality. The first Africa/Europe summit took place in Cairo, in April 2000. It took another seven years before the next summit took place in 2007. The most interesting point according to him was the Joint African European Strategy (JAES) in 2007 but it turned out that the implementation was more difficult than thought. At the summit in 2014, it became clear that the ‘common values’ invoked in Lisbon were no longer so common. In 2015 migration became the big issue and the migration summit in La Valletta was organized. The next regular EU AU summit took place in 2017 Abidjan with one focus on youth and employment. In the meantime on both sides, in Africa and in Europe, many changes happened and Europe is no longer the only partner for Africa, after China and other emerging powers came in.

**Rita Isiba:** Mr. Pitswane, what are the priorities and strategy plans from the African side for 2020?

**Johnny Pitswane** emphasizes that a new alliance in 2020 should mean a partnership of equals since this was not the case historically. We have to ask how a new partnership will be for the benefit of both continents. Things in Africa have changed. Today seven of the worldwide fastest-growing economies are in Africa and the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA – Africa Club Sep 2019) will give the internal trade another upturn. As a new priorities climate and environmental changes will be included. The African Peace Facility will remain crucial.

**Rita Isiba:** Now I would like to ask Mr. Melan to give us insights about Austria. How can the Austrian contribute to the discussion and what is the Austrian plan?

**Andreas Melan:** The Austrian plans are a mirror of the European plans. There have been many meetings since 2000 but 2020 is really the EU Africa year. All the member states are involved, even smaller states like Austria. There is a need to reshape of the European strategy.

We are aware of how much Africa has changed, and it will be reflected in the new EU Africa strategy:

What are the next steps: The EU and AU Commissions will meet end of February top exchange their first drafts. On May 4 and 5, 2020, there will an ministerial meeting of the EU and AU held in Kigali, where Austria will also participate. The EU AU summit will be held in Brussels in October, but we do not know the exact date yet.

There will be discussions about how the partnerships should be developed. What kind of partner can Europe be for Africa and the other way round? What about climate change? If there is no equality yet, how to get there? How to share responsibility?

**Rita Isiba:** What is Austria's vision for a fruitful partnership?

**Andreas Melan:** There is a new government and a new government program. Africa was mentioned four times. A task force will established a ministerial level to develop a first draft for the strategy. There will be a dialogue with the parliament and the business sector as well as the civil society and diaspora.

**Rita Isiba:** Now I would like to come to Celine Fabrequette from the youth network ADYFE. Could you share with us the talks about the African youth initiatives and about an Erasmus program?

**Celine Fabrequette:** The participation of the youth is important. In 2017 in Abidjan there was an important youth forum beside the summit. Ten millions Euros were allocated to six pilot projects of the EU AU youth agenda, 25.000 young people were able to participate in the Erasmus exchange program. They are still not satisfied, because we want more young African people to participate. So far, diaspora organizations have been linked with the projects. One challenge is the question of communication: not enough people know about this program. The big gap between each summit is a problem because little happens in between. We hope that people will continue collaborating between the summits.

**Role of African Diaspora (see also attached power point presentation):**

- The African Diaspora Youth Forum Europe is a network based on three pillars: Youth Entrepreneurship, Employability and Civic Engagement.
- It brings together youth and African entrepreneurs. Create a synergy by putting different groups in different spaces.
- It focuses on employability because there are challenges for young people in accessing good jobs. ADYFE organizes jobs fairs where firms are present. When firms are asked what is their thought about diversity, they answer they want it for their firms but cannot find the people.
- Another point is civic engagement. The young people have to make use of their voting rights and participate and exchange with the local government. Diaspora is reorganized as major actors so it is time for more engagement.
- Migration remains a big topic although it was not in the centre of Charles Michels speech during the Addis summit. Climate change and digitalization bring business opportunities for development.

- ADYFE ensures diaspora participation during the major EU/AU events and is a main coordinator of the EU AU Youth summit. Up to now this work is little or no remuneration.

### **Rita Isiba opens the floor**

**One participant** cited Pravin Gordhan, Minister of Public Enterprises who said during a Conference in Vienna that the huge inequalities between the two continents are a legacy of colonialism. Gordham stressed the need for European–African relations to be re-conceptualised and that they should be based on principles like solidarity, social justice and human development’ (see [Conference Conclusion Inequality](#)).

**Participant:** In the past, the talks about a vision of community and new start of relations remained empty rhetorics and was not translated into practice. Fear that it is not going to be a new start but the continuing of the old ways.

**Answer Andreas Melan:** Maybe there are different ideologies, but there is definitely a change in the narrative. The first chapter is very positive, unrealistically so even. The strategy recognizes the big changes happening in Africa: The young population is now getting in power. A new generation means a new Africa. There is a change in the way migration is now described in the papers: represents a benefit for the development of the country and economic benefits on both sides.

**Participant:** How do we make Austrian businessmen take the risk?

**Andreas Melan:** This was a big question in December 2018 during the High Level Europe Africa Forum. A 10 million budget was offered for businesses to enter the African markets. But is this enough? Are Austrian companies willing to go to Africa? Key areas were developed and suggested, but it needs key infrastructures to develop a business. If Africa wants to attract business partners, it needs to create a safe environment for business owners and lower the bureaucracy. This is the challenge.

**Youssouf Diakité** from ADYFE states that he has attended to the last two head meetings in Brussels, which were interesting but there was no mention of migration. There is no outcome of the gatherings and lack of trust. How are you going to deal with the factor “needs of Africa”?

**Answer Andreas Melan:** He feels too, that migration is not being discussed enough. He agrees that the European approach has to take more the realities in Africa into account. It is important for the institutions to keep up the good work of the diaspora. For example, there is not a lot of progress in the African diaspora skills database.

**Alexis Neuberg** is acting president of the African European Development Platform in Brussels (ADEPT). He argues that the way of thinking and rituals does not change from summit to summit. The institutions in Brussels consult the member states and ask about changes in their approaches towards Africa. But is Brussels ready to listen? How can new ideas – including from the diaspora - be already taken into consideration in the drafting process?

**Andreas Melan:** The drafting is an open process. We pay attention to the Youth Forum. There are no deadlines, we take our time and listen carefully to the different propositions but also what our means are (budget) and what structures we have at our disposal? On an Austrian level, we observe a growing interest in Africa and an augmentation of activities. New drivers come in, like the private sector with different kinds of investments. Who to

accommodate them? This is important because millions of young people enter every year into the labor market and need jobs.

**Irène Hochauer Kpoda**, a Burkina Faso diaspora representative, states that the security strategies did not contribute to silence the guns but created sometimes more chaos and instability. Especially the French approach has to be questioned.

**Andreas Melan**: Peace and security are one of the main themes discussed. Peace and security are essential, because without it no development progress is possible. Many countries are fragile which might ruin the whole progress. France's way of dealing with it for instance might be criticized but the fear of terrorism is present. The security in Sahel is permanently present in our agenda. The strong focus is to reach a sort of stability in those (Sahel) countries.

**Georg Lennkh**: In the last years there was an *increase* of terrorism, which complicates things. If African countries are not careful about its sovereignty, *Africa will become the new islamic state* in a few years. He does not see Europe furthering its involvement with a military presence. He asks what kind of partnership does Africa want from Europe?

**Franz Schmidjell** emphasizes that some important issues are not included in the agenda like the huge illicit capital out-floss from the African continent mostly towards OECD countries. The security problem is also a problem of lack of justice which can lead to radicalization. Inequality has been mentioned before. It became smaller between all world regions except between Europe and Africa. We have to ask why? Another aspect is that the ritualized summits does not really include the civil society or new African thinkers.

**Rita Isiba**: Over 80% of the people in the Sub-Sahara region is employed in the informal sector. What has ADYFE done in this respect? How to manage road maps towards the decent employment among the Youth?

**Celine Fabrequette**: ADYFE has its programs in place, but since there are no funds available, most of the work is done on a voluntary work basis. The access to funds for diaspora organizations is still a big challenge. The cooperation with local companies is important. But European firms come very often with their "know how" and their people and do not try to build up the capacities locally. Therefore putting conditions on investment is crucial, such as hiring local people for example, and public projects.

**Rita Isiba**: Is it possible to hire and buy locally without more expenses and risks?

**Johnny Pitwane**: In South Africa, the transfer of skills is primordial. There is an involvement in infrastructures' progress but not always the capacity. It is important for foreign businesses to have a social responsibility. We need better regulations with regards to capacity building and social and environmental standards. American companies like Amazon are omnipresent, also Europe could be left behind if they are not innovative and use the opportunities as they present themselves. Furthermore, we need to insure our diaspora is capacitated. The common vision in Africa is that things cannot stay as they were before.

**Georg Lennkh**: Taxes are also an important factor to finance infrastructure and public services. We need to address the hundreds of years of colonial domination. But I think the future of Africa is very bright.

**One participant** states that the first step for a new Austrian or European strategy should be to look at our policies and how they affect negatively Africa before going to the African partners.

**Johnny Pitswane:** There are issues to be dealt with which can have an effect on development or relevant for our people. For example, there are Africa artifacts in European museums: Let it be a mutual agreement which respects priorities from both sides..

**Rita Isiba wraps up:**

There is a need to address uncomfortable topics.

Mr. Lennkh gave a brief historic overview and stressed that we grew closer and closer

Role of the Youth and women have to included stronger

Mr. Pitswane urged of assessing prospects for this year. What are the priorities? Importance of topics and regions.

Mr. Melan mentioned the events happening this year and the need for partnership of equals.

Mrs. Fabrequeet metioned the ADYFE education programs, trainings and advocacy which receives little funding. She also stressed the Policy coherence for sustainable development.

Thanks everyone for his or her participation and contribution to the debate.

**Final note:** *"If we focus on the things we cannot control we risk losing control on the things we can".*



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