



Minutes from the Afrika Club of February 23, 2022

AU EU Summit 2022. High Aspirations and New Challenges.

Contributions from:

- **Robert Zischg**, Head of Department Sub-Sahara Africa and African Union, Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **Mirana Rajoharison** (zoom - Brussels), Programme Director of ADEPT (Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform)
- **Philomena Apiko**, (zoom - Maastricht) Head of AU-EU relations at ECDPM (European Centre for Development Policy Mangement)
- **Belachew Gebrewold** (zoom - Innsbruck), Head of Department & Studies, MCI - The Entrepreneurial University Group, Innsbruck
- **Georg Lennkh**, former Austrian Special Representative for Africa, Curator Bruno Kreisky Forum

Moderation: **Margit Maximilian**, Africa Correspondent, Austrian Broadcasting Company

Report: **Tomas Glantschnig**, ADYFE (African Diaspora Youth Forum in Europe)

Africa Europe Week 2022 – [videos on demand](#)

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



Franz Schmidjell welcomes the participants and especially the guests participating via Zoom from Brussels, Maastricht and Innsbruck. The topic of discussion is the 2022 AU EU Summit, including its results, the positions of convergence and divergence, the involvement of civil society and African diaspora and the summits impact on the upcoming Austrian Africa strategy. With regards to the Africa Europe Week, the encouraging proposals from CSOs and Youth have to be praised. For example, the proposals of inter-generational co-management in public institutions and inclusive institutionalized migration dialogues.

Moderator **Margit Maximilian**, a senior Africa correspondent who attended the last AU-EU Summit in Abidjan, reacted to the media coverage of African issues and added that the Austrian Broadcasting Company ORF has no single field office in Sub-Sahara Africa. But after long-ongoing talks (for over 10 years) there might be plans to open an office in 2024. She continues by describing the Austrian media coverage of the 2022 AU EU Summit as limited due to the unfolding Russian-Ukraine crisis. While the guests are formally being introduced, an initial question on the mood, fulfillment of expectations and difference to the previous Abidjan Summit (2017) is raised.

Philomena Apiko, analyst at the Brussels/Maastricht Think Tank ECDPM, mentions that the abundant presence of African head of states and governments, particularly during the current pandemic, represented a success. Four countries (Burkina Faso, Guinea-Conakry, Mali and Sudan) were excluded from participation due to their recent coup d'états and accordingly non-compliance with the AU rules of governance. The final declaration seems promising, but words are not enough. The commitment of at least 450 million vaccines to be delivered by mid-2022, raises some skepticism as similar promises have been made in the past, but not honored. The fact that until recently pharmaceutical companies were valuing financial gains over human lives, by not being willing to share their vaccine formulas is unacceptable. A recent positive development has been the establishment of a vaccine manufacturing partnership, paving the way for the creation of local vaccine production centers in six African countries (Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia) – not only for COVID-19, but also other common infectious disease such as tuberculosis and malaria. The local mRNA production was initiated by WHO already before summit. The final declaration lacks concrete proposals and action plans. Furthermore, a gap it to be noted between the civil society demands and the summits concluding statement. Particularly on the non-inclusion of a rights-based long-term approach to migration and the crucial role of diaspora. It is crucial note that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the trust between both sides has been broken on different levels due to unfulfilled promises (e.g. reluctant vaccine sharing) and political decisions.

Georg Lennkh, who was present at the first three (Cairo, Lisbon, Tripolis) of the now six AU-EU summits, further underlines the success of the forum, as it fulfilled the Austrian delegation's (including of chancellor Karl Nehammer and Robert Zischg) expectations. It allowed for many pertinent exchanges with African heads of states and governments. A brief recap of the AU-EU summits history is then given. The 2007 Lisbon Summit represented a high point for Africa-Europe relations. Many joint guidelines and initiatives around common values and the common history were developed and successfully passed. This period also led to the interesting realization that Africa wants to be treated as a one, not as many different countries. While the 2010 Tripolis Summit didn't enjoy a particular interest, first major divergent views in the relationship were noticed on the run-up to the 2014 Brussels summit. These cracks can be summarized by the words of a Nigerian ambassador, who stated "We have our values, you have yours". Presently, a common ground needs to be found to effectively solve problems together. Overall, the AU-EU relations need to balance the lack of a common EU member states foreign policy, the asymmetrical relationship between EU/Europe and AU/Africa, the AU - established in 2002 - lacks recognition outside of Addis Ababa and difficult relation between African government leaders and its civil society.



Robert Zischg (BMEIA), who attended the summit, gained a very positive impression for several reasons. The preparatory foreign ministry meeting in October 2021 in Kigali, Rwanda, didn't predict such a positive outcome. First, with 38 heads of states and governments, eight foreign ministers and one vice-president, a strong participation from the African side could be noted. Secondly, there was a real commitment from African leaders to strengthen ties and operationalize projects (including with youth involvement). They proactively engaged in exchanges with the European counterparts. Thirdly, all events (opening and closing plenaries, seven round roundtables) enjoyed productivity and led to concrete proposals. Fourthly, the final declaration englobed actionable items in for instance the fields of health and investment, including many proposals for concrete flagship initiatives. Thus, with a commitment of EUR 150 billion within the EU Global Gateway initiative and the 450 million vaccines to being sent from Europe, the results are quite impressive. The money comes new sources, a considerable amount of it will come from the private sector. Ultimately, a monitoring mechanism shall be implemented. A joint commission will be tasked to regularly monitor (every six months) the state of the proposal's implementation. The topic of migration was also discussed in a roundtable co-chaired by Austria, entitled "Education, culture and vocational training, migration and mobility". While illegal migration should be prevented and legal migration ways emphasized, an African representative cautioned that they weren't interested in further brain drain. Addressing the root migration causes is challenging due to the very diverse nature of the country's contexts. The results of the summit will act as a guideline for an upcoming trade ministers conference organized by the minister of economy Margarete Schramböck. It shall focus on implementing an investment package, as well as doing business in Africa to boost job creation and local private sector.

Mirana Rajoharison notes that the 2022 AU-EU Summit has been branded as a partnership of equals. Nevertheless, the final declaration should have taken African aspirations more into consideration. It failed to recognize the role of diaspora as agents of change, representing a real disappointment and missed opportunity for African heads of state and governments. Further, the root causes of migration have not been addressed. The summit was co-chaired by Senegal and France – the two countries that will also jointly chair the Global Forum on Migration and Development starting from July. Thus, it might have given a preview of a more positive framing of migration and diaspora in the global migration agenda. Altogether, controversial decisions (e.g. EU travel ban, non-delivery of waiver) made during the ongoing pandemic have strained the Africa-Europe relationship.

Belachew Gebrewold declares that with the increasing role of other global players on the continent, such as China and Russia, Europe became increasingly aware of the significance of Africa. But it is still a relationship and not a partnership of equals. Whilst the 2020 EU Strategy with Africa includes new elements plus the old aid behaviour. Despite their geographic proximity and significant historic relations, Africa-Europe relations are not sufficiently developed. For comparison, due to economic reasons Europe possesses a stronger relationship with the United States. On the subject of migration, addressing its root causes is difficult. Studies have determined that they are often difficult to identify and cannot always be limited to conflict, poverty or climate change. Moreover, it is crucial to note that the bulk of migratory flows take place within Africa and African nations are rarely among the leading countries of origin of migrants, the EU had a strong focus to develop Africa-specific migration control strategies. The term of migration crisis is regularly used in Europe, not in Africa. The political motivation and psychological impact must be questioned. Further, the French president's remarks on a "tired" Africa-Europe relationship presupposes that they previously were in a good shape, ignoring the burden of slavery and colonization. A new kind of relationship must be started, which considers the history. Of course, not all problems arise out of Europe's involvement. He emphasized that the Austrian-African university group represents a successful example of a partnership to be followed. An increased mobilization of Austrian resources, researchers and scientists is needed.



Discussion participants. Concerning the coups d'état one participant noted that we have to ask for the reasons for the it and why it got in some countries popular support. European countries lack the in-depth understanding/analysis of the political reality on the African continent. These subjects needs more analysis, including the issue what kind of democracy Africa wants.

Another question referred to the reallocation of IMF Special Drawing Rights to vulnerable countries. The final declaration welcomes the pledges by some EU member states but lacks concrete conclusions.

One observation was that from an European viewpoint there exists two perceptions of Africa: One of failed and fragile nations plundered by crises and one of fast growing, striving, economically booming countries.

One stressed that the recommendations of the civil society need to be fully acknowledged and included in AU-EU work programs. Some EU member states have elaborated diaspora engagement programs, others like Austria should develop them.

Concluding remarks by Mr. Zischg: He added that the Austrian Africa strategy shall also include some of the results of the 2022 AU EU summit and will hopefully be ready for adoption by the end of 2022. The ECDPM was commissioned with a study on the content of a future Austrian Africa strategy. After an initial desk study of Africa strategies of relevant European countries, a first round of interviews with stakeholders and civil society will be held in March and April 2022. The study itself shall be ready in early summer.