



The European Union and Africa towards 2030: perspectives from transnational civil society organisations

Valentina Brogna

Abstract

Transnational civil society organisations bear visions on development of the African continent, and take a stand, in the multi-level governance of development cooperation, participating (or refraining from it) to the definition of the EU strategic engagement. Do International Non-Governmental Development Organisations and African-led Organisations attribute the same importance to the EU as a global developmental actor, particularly for Africa? SDG17 sets the legal (morally binding) framework under which supranational actors, among others, are warmly invited to contribute to reach Sustainable Development by 2030. The rhetoric of aid as redeeming for the poor and redemptive for the rich, in line with an updated 'white man's burden', might be transubstantiated in the narrative of a new EU-AU 'equal partnership'. Around the revision of the European Consensus on Development, EU-Africa relation configurations proposed by studied organisations range in a spectrum from enlightened Afro-EU dialogue to African self-reliance (and European disengagement).

Keywords

Governance of development cooperation - EU-Africa relations - Transnational civil society organisations - Civil dialogue - African diaspora

The European Union politics of development in Africa: introductory elements

Development cooperation towards African countries is one of the mantras in current global governance. Among the panoply of stakeholders engaged in this endeavour and legitimated by SDG17 (UN 2015), the European Union (EU) proudly asserts its place, distinguished for its 'benevolent nature' linked to the promotion of multilateralism, human rights, democracy, good governance, and the highest collective Official Development Assistance (ODA) records (EC 2016b)¹. The EU has the clear intention to

¹ EU collective ODA amounts are nevertheless lower than remittances by African diaspora, which is considered by the African Union as its 6th region (Mohamed Igueh Ofleh, African Union Permanent

profile itself as this philanthropic global actor, although the Europeanisation process in the sector be still far from achieved (Orbie and Carbone 2016), and looks at Africa as the main extensive operating field of its ambition. It does so by equipping itself of the formal elements denoting political interest, including: a machinery devoted to development cooperation policy (inherently complex, seen the EU double nature – supranational and intergovernmental – but even more so now, due to the policy interrelatedness enshrined in the mainstream 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), an allocated budget and, more symbolically, an agreed strategy (the New European Consensus on Development, NECoD; EU 2017). Moreover, the EU is currently reshaping its official narrative about EU-Africa relations, under the slogan *with Africa* highlighted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini:

I think we managed finally, this year, to move from the *for* to the *with*, from the *aid perspective* to the *partnership perspective*. At the [...] EU-AU Summit in November, we will clearly send this strong political message: the EU and the AU have moved to a different kind of relationship, not donor-recipient but two political partners covering all aspects of our relationship (EP 2017, 17:40 – 18:25).

A whole set of questions could be raised, including on the geopolitical, historical, cultural elements defining this renewed partnership. The purpose of this paper is to enquire on transnational perspectives about the EU role vis-à-vis Africa, taking Civil Society Organisations (CSOs; Lewis 2009) as actors of the international political system which represent a movement of global citizens trying to influence policies, more than politics, and are considered by part of the literature as a new juridical subjectivity in international relations which contributes to the advancement of human rights ideals and norms (Papisca and Mascia 2004, 106-8). Beyond irenic definitions and an outer image of internal solidarity, the transnational arena can equally be studied as a political place where interests, on top of ideas, are debated and do not always converge. In this sense, how are African peoples' interests transnationally represented within EU decision-making in the field of development cooperation? Two typologies of organisations, I assumed, would be most active in this regard: International Non-Governmental Development Organisations (INGDOs) operating in African countries (because of their alleged representativeness of the non-state not-for-profit development community), and African-led Organisations (AIOs), as they allegedly represent the interests of African peoples without intermediaries, in a self-empowering process which resonates with a panafricanist vision of EU-Africa relations

Mission to the EU, communication given at the meeting "Changing African Narratives through Diaspora Initiatives", Africa Communications Week, Brussels, May 23, 2017).

and can find its legal (non-binding²) basis in the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (UN 1986). More precisely, I focused on Africa-based Organisations (AbOs) and Europe-based African Diasporic Networks (ADNs).

It is of interest, here, to understand the diversity of perspectives that are formally expressed through EU official civil dialogue mechanisms with the view of influencing legislative and policy outcomes, civil dialogue being defined as «the interactive dynamics expressed through the complex and broad network of access channels provided by the EU to non-state and non-governmental actors, above all those with human-promotion solidarity objectives» (Mascia 2007, 55). The reasons behind the lack of engagement of some of the above-mentioned actors are equally noteworthy to understand.

The decision-making process around the NECoD is the case study for this analysis. Adopted in June 2017, the NECoD aims at strategically directing EU policies on development cooperation *latu sensu* until 2030, in line with the 2030 Agenda (UN 2015). I focused on selected contributions (see Annex 1) to the online public consultation launched by the European Commission (EC) from May to August 2016, through qualitative textual analysis. Semi-directive interviews to staff members or founders of selected INGDOs and ADNs completed the picture (see Annex 2).

The concepts of Sustainable Development (SD; UN 2015; Kanie and Biermann 2017) and African Renaissance (AR; Tounkara, Lolo, and Mavoungou-Pemba 2015; do-Nascimento 2008) operate as theoretical framework of the research. *Africa* is considered as a whole unit of analysis, in line with the panafrican unitary vision (Boukari-Yabara 2017) currently regaining ground among people of African descent in Europe.

Echoing the overarching 2030 Agenda, the NECoD as well contains explicit reference to *Africa* (the term appears 7 times in the text, not better specified, whereas other areas such as Asia and Latin America appear only once and juxtaposed); this is not due to panafricanist intentions, but rather to propose an equivalence between a broadly defined geographical category and a broadly encompassing socio-economic-environmental imperative. Taking Gross National Income (GNI) per capita as a development indicator, in fact, 53 out of 55 African countries can be classified as 'developing' or 'to be developed': 27 count as Low Income Countries (LICs) and 26 as Medium Income Countries (MICs), with great differences within this subcategory (World Bank 2017). *Africa* in these terms is thus the place where SDG17 can be deployed to its maximum extent. However, this data does not show the economic growth and social development rates that many African countries are witnessing in

² On the dispute among developing and developed countries on the necessity of hard or soft law around the Right to Development, see Arts and Tamo 2016, 234-5.

recent years; as already argued (Easterly 2009), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) preceding the SDGs would be only partially met in Africa mostly due to their arbitrary design rather than African countries' complete inability. A half full or half empty glass? Huge diversity among countries prevent, of course, a unitary reply.

After enquiring about ownership of development paths by African citizens, the paper explores participation to civil dialogue at EC level around the NECoD negotiations. Selected contributions to the EC public online consultation are compared to perceptions by ADN representatives and the EC Communication (2016) 740.

A claim for endogeneity: is Sustainable Development African enough?

Since the big decolonisation wave of the 1960s, development cooperation for Africa has been priority in the international community. Unlike Europe and North America, the developmental process for the rest of the world was inherently prescriptive and exogenous in its conceptualization (Arsel and Dasgupta 2015, 647). The right to self-determination in development (individually and collectively conceived) and the duty of international cooperation are both recognized in international human rights law (UN 1986, Arts. 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.3, 4.2, 6.1), with the primary responsibility incumbent on each sovereign State (Art. 3.1; UN 2015). Still, finding the right balance between the two can prove challenging, and the interpretation of what is co-operation and what is interference or imposition can be equivocal. The international development community is today much more sensitive to the necessity to involve local populations and national institutions in project design, implementation and evaluation: *ownership* and *contextualisation* are key mainstream concepts. However, to deploy the concept of *appropriation* (Bergamaschi 2016) would bring us a step closer to a genuine consideration of African peoples' agency. In the framework of the 2030 Agenda, although implementation be univocally up to the national level, a set of methodological questions could be raised: how will SDG17, calling for a renewed multi-stakeholder partnership, influence National Sustainable Development Plans (NSDPs)? How much sovereignty will African countries, in concrete factual terms, have over their plans? How will African citizens participate in their definition?

Beyond the evident assumption that citizens' participation can render better adaptability to a given context, thus increasing legitimacy and the potential success of a programme, the issue lies, much more profoundly, in the growing readiness showed by (some?) African citizens to be more actively involved in the economic, social, philosophical, cultural destiny of their countries and countries of origin, above all (but not limited to) young people. A fervid cultural debate is going on among the African diaspora in Europe and people on the continent around the need to rethink Africa with African lenses, to rebrand Africa and to reshape an endogenous process of

modernisation / advancement; the concept of *development* itself is at times rejected as inherently western and inappropriate (Sarr 2016, 17; personal communications with representatives of ADNs in Brussels):

A momentum is growing about the role of African people (whether you are on the continent or outside) of owning the narrative and being deliberate about telling African stories from an African perspective, about shaping the conversation, the discourse around it (Africa focused communications professional, ACW, pers. comm., July 18, 2017).

We are for African Renaissance: it is a concept which aims for Africans to re-appropriate their own historic, scientific, economic, political and cultural traditions and innovate based on those African cultural values, in order to rethink an endogenous development and reconstruct their own destiny (Marie-Charlotte Tatepo, Renaissance Africaine ASBL, pers. comm. September 28, 2017).

Other ADNs prefer to inscribe their action within the SDG framework, trying to propose their own vision from within the mainstreamed developmental arena (Bora Kamwanya, ACP YPN, pers. comm., October 18, 2017).

Trying to inform EU development policy through official channels

The role of the EU as distinguished from the one of Member States (MS) in the field of development cooperation begun growing since 2000, like its legislative corpus and the institutions and organs involved. The first European Consensus on Development was produced in 2005 in an attempt to gather a shared vision on the EU role in the field (Orbie and Carbone 2016). Revising it in 2016-2017 was a way to show how much the EU vision fits within the Sustainable Development framework that it contributed to shape. The main steps of the process are outlined below.

Table 1. Calendar for NECoD decision-making process

	Time frame	Initiating actors	Initiative	Target stakeholders
1	25 Sept 2015	UNGA	Adoption of 2030 Agenda	Multiple, global level
2	23 May 2016	EC, DG DEVCO, UNIT A1, in association with EEAS, Global 5	Publication of Roadmap 2016/DEVCO/003	Multiple, EU level
3	30 May – 21 Aug 2016	EC	Public online consultation	Multiple, global level

4	9 Jun 2016	European Parliament (EP)	Committee referral announced in Parliament, 1st reading/single reading	EP
5	Jun – Aug 2016	EC	5 High level policy meetings, including the European Development Days (EDDs) 2016	Multiple
6	22 Nov 2016	EC	Communication COM (2016) 740 final	EP, European Council, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions
7	28 Nov 2016	Council of the EU	3504 th meeting (Foreign Affairs and Development) Debate	Council
8	25 Jan 2017	EP DEVE Committee	Vote in committee, first and single reading	EP DEVE Committee
9	13 Feb 2017	EP	Debate in plenary	EP
10	14 Feb 2017	EP	Vote in plenary, first and single reading	EP
11	19 May 2017	Council of the EU	Debate and vote, first and single reading, possible adoption	Council
12	May 2017	EP	Final vote	EP
13	7 Jun 2017	EU and MS	Official adoption during the EDDs 2017	

(Sources: European Commission, European Parliament and European Council websites)

Two official civil dialogue mechanisms were launched by the European Commission to inform its first draft communication: the public online consultation (EC n.d.) and at least 5 high level meetings, including the European Development Days 2016 (EDDs; Table 1, points 3 and 5; ADE 2016). Certainly, the actual influence that online public consultations have on the legislative production at EU and international level is difficult to prove and is questioned (Orsini 2016), even within the CSO field:

The EU institutions are often compelled to consult civil society. Whether then this consultation be useful, exhaustive and taken into consideration we cannot know in advance. It is only ex-post, when we verify the final approved text, that we can see which points were considered that we were insisting upon. [...] Consulting

CSOs is the praxis. Institutions tend sometimes to do it as a window-dressing exercise rather than to truly get inspiration from CSOs (Francesca Romana Minniti, CONCORD, pers. comm., April 6, 2017).

Still, in this consultation the CSO sector, as re-categorized by the European Commission³, was the most reactive one (see Table 2).

Table 2. Categories of respondents to EC online public consultation on NECoD (publicly available)

Categories of respondent	Total publicly available	Of which anonymous
Individuals	23	10
Civil Society Organisations	108	12
Public administrations and Government institutions	12	4
International Organisations	5	1
University and academia	7	1
Private sector	9	1
Other	1	0

(Source: EC website, categorisation chosen by respondents among a given set of possibilities, and readjusted by EC)

The working fields of respondents were diverse. The majority was devoted to developmental issues broadly (47). A considerable part was also made up of environmental NGOs (13), NGOs working specifically on water and sanitation (9) and on healthcare (13). Other organisations' focuses were mainly in the fields of democratisation (4), conflict prevention and peace-building (3), education (9), women's rights (2) and labour rights (2)⁴.

Roughly 1 in 5 organisations were not based in Europe. This participation could imply a perception of the EU as a global actor in the field. In total, only 2 organisations were based in Africa: the Organisation of the African Youth (OAY, South Africa, registered in 11 African countries, OAY n.d.) and the United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLGA, Morocco, with 40 national member associations, UCLGA n.d.).

INGDOs with headquarters in Europe contributed massively to the consultation, showing a great interest in influencing the NECoD, because of its strategic programmatic nature:

³ The EC reclassified as CSOs' some contributions from participants self-identified as pertaining to other categories. I followed the EC categorisation.

⁴ My classification.

The intention for many MS, EU institutions and CSOs (for instance this is CONCORD's position) is to try and have in it as many issues as possible so as to avoid, in the future, some issues not to be dealt with on the basis that they are not contained in the programmatic document. [...] It's about defining priorities in order to have a framework reference (F. R. Minniti, CONCORD, pers. comm.).

ADNs, on the other hand, did not officially take part (some representatives participated on an individual capacity). The reasons for this absence can be of a contextual, tactical or ideological nature, including: lack of interest in the EU as a developmental actor; preference for a direct participation during the EDDs (Table 1 point 5); preferential focus on other EU processes, such as the Post-Cotonou negotiations (like for ACP YPN and ACW, pers. comm.); rejection of EU as a priority actor for the development of Africa and of the 2030 Agenda as a change-oriented tool.

African Diasporic Networks (ADNs) in Europe: diverse objectives

The diversity of ADNs in Europe (with Brussels as the city that best exemplifies it as the headquarters of European institutions, on top of national and local ones) comes here into play to attempt an explanation for their limited participation in the NECoD negotiations. Although an exhaustive mapping of ADNs in Europe or Belgium is not the focus here, at least three typologies can be sketched:

- a) Community associations active at local level (regrouping people coming from one city/sub-region, one country, or different countries) mainly with cultural aims, some of which lobby their local communities around integration issues. These may also have a developmental focus towards their cities/sub-regions, countries of origin;
- b) Panafricanist associations/organisations (following a Panafricanist political project) which deliberately choose not to be involved in civil dialogue or lobbying to the EU nor the national (European) level, but rather work from Europe, directing their activities towards African countries or people of African origins, the interaction in or with Europe being perceived as of limited importance;
- c) Panafrican associations/organisations (regrouping people of African descent from different countries) which engage in civil dialogue and perform lobbying activities at different levels, including EU and AU: these can have both an integration and a development component for their work.

Typology a) associations are not necessarily interested in the EU decision-making processes on development and their implications for African countries:

Many African diaspora associations [...] do not lobby the EU because they don't see the point, because nobody explains them the interest for doing so. [...] Many of them operate at local communal level, sometimes at federal [Belgian] level to get funds. [...] The European Commission is too far and too complex. [...] They have a local mission, a local interest, a local anchoring (Annie, Meridia Partners and ACW, pers. comm. Sept. 28, 2017).

A potential gate-keeping effect by some INGDOs, historically more involved in advocacy at EU level, might as well play a part, a dialogue between INGDOs and ADNs being still missing:

Those Brussels-based associations which have cooperation projects did not see the entering door, because if you do not pass through CONCORD, you don't know how to enter that process. [...] Officially CONCORD was managing the process, in the attempt to be perceived as the interlocutor [vis-à-vis EU institutions - ndr] from the CSO sector (Annie, pers. comm.).

Panafricanist associations/organisations under typology b), on the other hand, do not have an EU focus on purpose. They prefer to work for development of African countries by empowering people of African origins to be directly involved:

I don't lobby at EU level because I consider it a waste of time. [...] It is very difficult to challenge their position: there are always discussions, but when you ask questions going outside their traced path, they won't reply. [...] They are showing a win-win partnership but on the other hand they are pushing for EPAs⁵. [...] The same people who are destroying Africa are the ones who are giving money to repair it (M.-Ch. Tatepo, pers. comm.).

Some Panafrican associations/organisations under typology c) are emerging in the last few years with a federating objective. The term *Panafrican* here might transcend the practice observed by Grégoire and Petit (2011, 152-153): we could be witnessing the creation of networks not only regrouping people originating from different African countries, but also aiming at contributing to the consolidation of a unitary continent and its development.

Among these organisations, the African Diaspora Network in Europe (ADNE; ADNE n.d.), the Africa Caribbean Pacific Young Professional Network (ACP YPN; ACP YPN n.d.;

⁵ Economic Partnership Agreements.

B. Kamwanya, pers. comm.) and the Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT; ADEPT n.d.; Devex n.d.; B. Kamwanya, pers. comm.) participated to the EDDs 2016, rather than the online public consultation, probably as this is more useful to gain visibility within the development community at EU level (EC 2016d; B. Kamwanya pers. comm.).

The perception of some INGDOs as fundamental actors in the EU lobbying panorama is present among this typology as well, where some are considering an entry strategy, in order to contribute to the definition of INGDOs' priorities from inside (B. Kamwanya, pers. comm.).

Development and Africa: which profile for the EU?

While analysis of the global context and general priorities highlighted by the sample in the public online consultation (see Annex 1) showed a diffuse convergence of ideas, it was on the EU role on development (and vis-à-vis the African continent) that replies, mainly of a prescriptive nature, considerably varied.

Consensual prioritisation – the sample was almost unanimous in considering how the current challenges highlighted in the EU survey questions (“changing geography and depth of poverty, climate change, global security challenges such as fragility and violent extremism, migration, ageing societies, unprecedented urbanization” among others; EC n.d.) are interlinked and mostly due to unbalanced uncontrolled globalisation processes. As per this anti-neoliberal approach, global power imbalances among and within countries would be driven by wealthy elites and transnational corporate companies determining the global economic system, exacerbating inequalities. This would in turn affect social cohesion, increasing migratory flows out of necessity and undermining the legitimacy of global institutions. Lack of innovative action by world politics was deplored. The EU, in this, would have multiple roles to perform, including: being a regulator of its own multinationals on the basis of respect of human rights, contribute globally to the fight against illicit financial flows (which constitute a considerable reduction in tax revenue for developing countries) and firmly contribute to a global transition to low carbon emission economy, through use of renewable energy sources.

Policy (in)coherence - this whole survey exercise by the EU seemed to be aimed at finding better policy coherence among its external action policies, in the context of the Lisbon Treaty, from a SD perspective. Incoherency among policies, institutions and decision-making levels imply gaps in the overall EU governance for development cooperation broadly considered. Respondents were unanimous in acknowledging the tripartite nature of this requirement: between EU development policy and other

external policies (a first step has been made through the EU Global Strategy, which advocates for the integration of several policies, including development cooperation, humanitarian aid, trade, common foreign and security policy, in the external action of the EU); between external and internal policies (a clear example being the repercussions of the Common Agricultural Policy externally); between EU institutions and MS (the two levels operating at times inconsistent policies in a given country, showing the need for a “whole of government” approach supranationally conceived).

Contextualisation and ownership - Respondents agreed on the fact that development policies should be better contextualised according to the specificity of each country, avoiding top-down programming. The definition of NSDPs being a state responsibility, the EU role should be, therefore, to facilitate this task, whether required, promoting CSO participation therein and in the implementation phase, ensuring ownership by the state and local population.

Migration through Human Rights lenses – Away from the security approach to migration currently pervading the European arena, the sample was unanimous in proposing a human-centered and rights-based approach, which would look at how to link migration and development policies not with the aim of controlling immigration in the EU. Recalling the root causes of migration out of necessity (lack of employment opportunities, war, climate change), the sample had very clear ideas of what would constitute internal priorities for the EU on migration: enabling legal flows, improving protection of migrants’ rights, supporting diaspora engagement in the society of arrival (through integration policies, protection of social and labour rights, fight against racism and xenophobia, facilitation of remittances).

Elaborating on the selected contributions, some preferred EU profiles can be sketched:

The aid giver – From this perspective, the EU should (continue to) distinguish itself in development cooperation because of its role as a global donor under ODA. Aid would have positive repercussions in developing countries, as a key source to finance public services. This should be coupled with long-term in-country support to domestic resource mobilisation (creation or enhancement of tax collection systems and of conditions to shift from the informal to the formal economy). The EU and MS should therefore keep their promises to increase ODA up to 0.7% GNI (CONCORD). This vision is in contrast with perceptions by many ADN representatives.

The (social, fiscal, environmental) justice champion – From this angle, the EU should focus on regulating its multinational firms controlling global value chains (GVCs) that involve African countries, in order to end situations of exploitation of people and natural resources and tax avoidance in those countries (OAY n.d., CONCORD). The EU should, furthermore, champion the adoption of a UN convention on business and human rights and propose the creation of a global tax body to contrast illicit financial

flows (CONCORD). Implementation of the Paris Agreement was also considered as a precondition for EU external credibility: an internal shift to a circular, low carbon, economy and a decrease in consumerist behaviours should be operated in order to achieve SDG12 (sustainable production and consumption), contributing to limiting resource grabs in developing countries (CONCORD).

The pro-panafricanist – The EU was here considered as a model of political integration, human rights and good governance, which should inspire other continents, like Africa (UCLGA n.d.). The EU as a supranational entity should engage at the corresponding decision-making level, refraining from bilateral engagements at country level: this would entail a strong political support to the African Union (AU), complementing the financial support already being given, as well as to sub-regional integration processes. Institutional changes would be needed in this sense: the EU should revise frameworks such as the Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP) EPAs and consider its southern neighbours as Africans, through the revision of its neighbourhood policy (UCLGA n.d; ECDPM).

The occidens power – The EU would be a declining power in the XXI century, South-South cooperation and alternative political models being proposed to developing countries that might outpace the appeal of EU financial support in the global influence race. The relative importance of ODA might be declining as soon as the income of least developed countries rise. The EU could, though, offer more than funds in this context, drawing from its example of social democracy (ECDPM).

The partner – According to the majority of the sample, the EU would be a fundamental partner for Africa, but in many different terms. The 2030 Agenda itself allows for a reconfiguration of development partnerships, under which the private sector is welcome, in order to differentiate donors and give new financial impetus to development. Some respondents would only welcome this under strict respect of Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility principles⁶ (CONCORD). The EU should also keep on partnering with the CSO sector, but here a divide emerges: should it support the field holistically taken, including international, national and local CSOs (CONCORD) or more deliberately target African-based organisations (OAY)?

The EC Communication (2016) 740

The EC communication released in November 2016 (EC 2016a) contained a good number of proposals shared by many survey respondents. Particularly, the EC confirmed acknowledgment of: the interlinked nature of the 2030 Agenda and the

⁶ Several international instruments already regulate these issues (including the Monterrey Consensus, Doha Declaration, Paris principles, Accra Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Bali principles, Rio conventions).

Paris agreement; the need to promote resource efficiency, sustainable production and consumption patterns, transition to a circular, low carbon emission economy; the need for policy coherence between internal and external policies and among EU institutions and MS; the increased diversification of country situations, not necessarily visible through a standard GNI/capita growth measurement (still, the EC did not foresee to adopt alternative measures of well-being); the usefulness of contextualised approaches in NSDP design; the need to foster job creation, improving access to factors of production, promoting progressive taxation, guaranteeing a basic income, ensuring access to global public goods and supporting sustainable GVCs; the need to facilitate trade and investment in developing countries (mention is also made to the ACP EPAs, said to cause unequal relations between developing countries and multinationals); the necessity to boost domestic resource mobilisation through capacity building on tax collection and tackling illicit financial flows; the necessity to support capacity building on statistical data collection.

Consistent differences in the EC Communication, as per the general vision of selected respondents, were on the other hand linked to areas including: the definition of partnerships involving the private sector (CSER was not mentioned, and Innovative Financial Instruments “blending” public and private funders were strongly welcomed which did not make the unanimity in the sample); the lack of consideration of SMEs as a key focus to boost development; a security approach to migration, and development considered as strategic to minimise it.

CONCORD commented the EC Communication with mild acceptance, showing specific concerns, on top of the above, for the failure to adequately acknowledge national ownership as a key development effectiveness principle. The lack of recognition of the role of civil society “at local, national and international” level, as well as the support for an enhanced, not critically assessed, role of large multinationals in development cooperation were also deplored (CONCORD 2017).

Africa as the playing field for EU global aspirations?

During the NECoD signing ceremony, Mogherini stressed once again the importance of the EU as a global actor and largest donor, highlighting the link that the EU makes between (external) development and (internal) security:

Together [EU and MS] we are by far the largest global donor, the *indispensable* partner for our friends across the globe and for a rule-based global order. [...] for us, investing in climate change actions, in human development, in humanitarian actions [...] is also a direct investment in European security. [...] I believe today we send a *reassuring* message that the European Union is there, tomorrow even

more than before, in partnership, building strong alliances to support the multilateral system and support a sustainable way of developing our planet (EDDs June 7, 2017, 00:28-1:11, 02:57-03:26, 03:49-04:07; European Council 2017).

Initiatives such as the EDDs and strategic documents like the NECoD are, at the eyes of some interviewees, communication tools to keep a place in the global development arena, with Africa as the main playing field for this ambition:

The EDDs are DG DEVCO flagship event shouting to the whole world “we are the first donor for Africa” [...] It is their first role in the world; because they have lost the leadership in so many fields, they will not let go this one for a long time still. [...] On this the diaspora could wake up a little bit, as in reality the first donor for Africa is the diaspora. [...] The NECoD has the same aim: to reinforce a pole position in a very specific field (Annie, pers. comm.).

When questioned on the EU role towards Africa, the ADN representatives were unanimous as to what the EU should stop doing: being a donor (4/4 interviewees); the rhetoric of aid should be abandoned, as considered useless on the ground in the long term. Unlike the consultation sample which, to different degrees, was giving the EU, for the years to come, a clear role to play in Africa (although more of a supportive nature), 3 ADN interviewees gave 3 different replies as to what the EU should concretely do instead: either enforce fair trade agreements, contribute to long-lasting peace or completely disengage.

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Annex 1: Selected sample

- The European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD).
- The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM).
- The Organisation of African Youth (OAY).
- United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLG Africa).

Annex 2: Interviews

- Francesca Romana Minniti, CONCORD Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, April 6, 2017.
- Africa-focused communications professional, AFRICA COMMUNICATIONS WEEK (ACW) organiser, July 18, 2017.
- Annie, MERIDIA PARTNERS, ACW organiser, September 28, 2017.
- Marie-Charlotte Tatepo, RENAISSANCE AFRICAINE ASBL founder, September 28, 2017.
- Bora Kamwanya, ACP YOUNG PROFESSIONAL NETWORK (ACP YPN) Advocacy and Parliamentary Relations Officer, October 18, 2017.

Valentina Brogna is a PhD Researcher in International Relations at the Research Centre on Political Science (CReSPo) and associate member of the Institute for European Studies (IEE) at Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles. Her research focuses on the participation of INGDOs and African Diasporic Networks within the governance of EU external action in the African continent. A former NGO professional, she worked for 4 years at the European Women's Lobby and volunteered for several NGOs operating on development cooperation, migration, integration and intercultural dialogue. She holds a Master's Degree in Institutions and Policies of Human Rights and Peace from Padua University and a Certificate of Political Studies from SciencesPo Bordeaux.

Email: valentina.brogna@usaintlouis.be