



Critical Issues for AU-EU Collaboration on Health and Science

17 February 2022

At the occasion of the AU-EU Summit (17-18 02 2022)

Conference Statement



The Conference, which was opened by the Hon. Fortune Charumbira, Acting President of the Pan-African Parliament, met on the 17th of February 2022, at the occasion of the AU-EU Summit, held in Brussels (17-18 February 2022).

The Conference welcomed the pledges for a renewed spirit in AU-EU Collaboration and especially the collaboration between the people of Africa and Europe.

The people of our two continents are bound together by geography, by history and by our joint interests into a sustainable and peaceful future.

The conference noted the multiple crises affecting the two continents and our world: Climate Change, Health, Sustainable Livelihoods, Education, Energy – multiple crises are aggravating each other.

The Pandemic has aggravated the inequalities to an extent that is no longer sustainable.

Therefore, a new vision of sustainable leadership is required that embraces all actors to work together towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: Public and Private Sector, Faith-based Organisations, Civil Society, we need a world which is not governed by collective helplessness, but which draws on the strengths that each and everyone can bring.

Science has a special role to play in the renewal of Africa and European cooperation, and seeing to the important role of digital innovation in all sectors of life.

We conclude that the AU and the EU have much to share, in a common interest to increase security, ownership of personal data and the internet, reduce conflict, enhance resilience and set our economic cooperation on a sustainable foundation.

We therefore ask:

On localization of manufacturing and procurement of vaccines:

Ambitious initiatives to support localization of production of vaccines, initiatives that are aligned with the plans prepared by the AU, and which will strengthen the development and manufacturing of vaccine production, and hence go further than focusing on the final stages of filling and packaging; the initiative must go beyond voluntary licensing arrangements, which is a special concern as so far those have been very scarce.

African and European collaboration to ensure that the producers on the African continent will be protected from potential patent infringement claims when they produce the vaccines, while the waiver on IP rights is still on hold, and to emphasize the need for an agreement between the EU and Africa on IP rights.

On Science preparedness:

Scientific collaboration between African and Europe should be embedded within a wider scientific capacity building agenda.

A policy concern to try to improve on at global level is how to reconsider the relationship between public and private research and development (R&D). The policy issue to try to resolve is whether governments' could negotiate differently when signing consecutive purchase contracts and to avoid that tax payers subsidies are transferred to investors in pharmaceutical companies.

Knowledge and technologies that are crucial to Covid-19 vaccine development and production were created with the contribution of governments. Patents filed by pharmaceutical companies do not protect the public interest arising from such earlier research. This knowledge must be treated as a public good.

On health professionals: The Africa CDC has developed a framework for public health workforce development, and this needs strong support by Europe. While some support from Europe is available, but more is needed and master's programmes for and in Africa are needed that include a research component.

Strengthening learning that fosters skills and employment of African learners, using internet and hybrid forms of learning and preparing the youth for the new digital era.

On Data

The planning and launch of an African Health Data Space in partnership with the European data space could be a gamechanger. It is critical that the foundation of Digital Data collaboration is fully compliant with the framework of Findable, Accessible (while protecting privacy of personal data), Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR) Data, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Localisation of Data in Local Repositories, enhancing the use of digital health data at Point of Care must be encouraged as the first of objective of digital health data collection, while data visiting of federated data in local repositories can ensure that the African continent is not left out of the new solutions of AI-based health tools.

On the partnership between the AU and the EU

The partnership should be a real partnership of equals based on trust and respect for African sovereignty.

Africa and Europe must work together on the challenges of labour market needs, the security and safety of migrants, the full protection of rights of refugees and migrants under international law and to fight organized crime that feeds on the vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants.

To foster peace, cultural diversity and languages that are central to the spirit of our people and to enhance collaboration through science and cultural exchanges based on respect for the pride we hold in our heritages.

Africa and Europe have so much to offer each other.

Let's face the extraordinary challenges together, as two continents bound together and belonging together and face the future of our people with hope and leadership.