



Advancing the Africa Agenda

Critical Issues for AU-EU Collaboration on Health and Science Opening Address

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All Protocol Observed



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The Munich Conference on Security issued last week a report on Global Security.

The key concern that [the report](#) raised was that the world has entered a state of Collective Helplessness.

So many crises are simultaneously competing for attention: the pandemic and health, climate change, biodiversity, food security, energy, the economy and livelihoods, security, poverty and inequality.

These are wicked challenges, which feed onto each other.

In light of these challenges the AU-EU Summit marks an important moment to turn collective hopelessness into collective aspiration.

It is my pleasure to open this conference because it will showcase what Africa and Europe can achieve together.

The Cameroon author Francis Njamnjoh said it as succinct as possible:

[C'est l'Homme que fait l'Homme](#) –

It is the people who make the people.

This is another way of saying: we are – collectively, in charge of our own destiny.

Francis Njamnjoh has also given us another wisdom, which is that as a world, and as people living in this world, we are by definition: [Incomplete](#).

He argues that it is a deep and important notion to reflect on our incompleteness as it may provide us with awareness that we always need others to advance to greater completion. We are better off together.

In the Pan African Parliament we practice this by complementing the efforts of the African Union with the representatives of the people of Africa, deliberating the destiny of Africa.

Africa needs Europe and Europe needs Africa. So much is clear. Our geographies and histories are intertwined and for one continent to thrive will always be to the benefit of the other continent.

The AU-EU Africa Summit is contemplating these issues here in Brussels today and tomorrow.

This conference is to complement this great effort of our leaders, and to say:

Your decisions, in all their wisdom, will depend on the leaders and people of our great continents to take effect.

The quality of your leadership shall be measured by the extent to which your decisions will serve the people of our two great continents.

These times of incredible upheaval and uncertainty demand extraordinary leadership.

Let's reflect on this conference on how we can contribute to the extraordinary challenges of today with science, innovation and leadership.

Europe should not underestimate its power to contribute to a better world. Looking at Europe from our Africa soil, we want Europe to succeed, to play its role in the world and to open its doors wide to collaboration with Africa

Today we will see examples of how we can tackle these wicked problems together.

How vaccine production in Africa, will contribute to European and global measures to get the pandemic under control.

How vaccine equality in Africa, will help us fight the corona variants of concern and the hidden spread of COVID.

How the need for COVID health data from Africa encouraged African computer science and data science. New design was developed by the [Virus Outbreak Data Network \(VODAN\)-Africa](#). It was carried out with understanding of African sovereignty on digital data. This development was linked to European ethical and regulatory frameworks of data protection. Together with scientific collaboration between nine countries in Africa and Europe on FAIR data, the researchers have parachuted a digital innovation which has reached a new level. This may become the foundation of a new safe internet.

How COVID-19 has challenged us to look at new ways of reaching vulnerable communities through mobile and hybrid digital technologies. We will hear of the creation of the Digital Innovation and Skills Hub ([DISH](#)) in which universities work together with other stakeholders to contribute to education-led practical approaches to generate more secure livelihoods for our youth.

How the challenges of hopelessness and insecurity have prompted universities to work with churches, community organisations and local leaders to strengthen dialogue and social transformation.

How the academy is the new place for sustainable leadership, where each and every student is encouraged to be bold, to face the challenges of our time, to give their best talents and to work with others to fund new solutions that fit the extraordinary challenges of our time.

Our African continent has so much to offer to Europe.

Our African continent shares so much with Europe.

Its old proud cultures and heritage. Its love for language and cultural diversity. Its love for music, theatre and the arts. Its love for agriculture, farms, wild landscapes, biodiversity and good and fresh food. Its love for science, mathematics, computations, technical innovativeness and creativity. Its love for curiosity, tourism, travel and meeting of people from different cultures. Its love for our ancestry, caring for the places where we belong and return to when all else is done. Its love for a healthy environment, where people care for each other and where everyone can find a place.

While we face extraordinary challenges, as African and European people we have extraordinary resources that we share.

It is an honour to open this conference and express the hope that this conference will inspire us, surprise us and will kick us out of collective helplessness into collective aspiration, into a vision of a future where we belong together.

Where we belong together, and where we together will be more complete.