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Europe and Africa Have a Common Future: How Can They Build It?

What Is Morocco's contribution to building this common future?

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Europe and Africa are two continents whose complementarities are manifest on several levels. The synchronisation of their production cycles and the growing interdependence of several economies in both continents mean that they now have a shared destiny. The success of Africa's accelerated convergence process is a function of, among other things, the quality of the partnership linking it to Europe. Similarly, the revitalisation of Europe's economy and the widening of its prospects are partly tied to the promotion of peace and prosperity in its African neighbours, in order to make them true catalysts of economic growth.

Apart from the strengths that could provide the basis for a mutually beneficial cooperation between Africa and Europe, these two geographical spaces face common challenges that could only be overcome by conceiving of a new paradigm of partnership and doing away with past approaches, which were classically based on the centre-periphery model.

Morocco – given its geostrategic position as a bridge between the two continents, its advanced status with the European Union, and its membership in the African Union (and more recently ECOWAS) – is well positioned to play an active role in building a better future, boosting the contribution of Europe and Africa to the new global geopolitical and geo-economic equilibria.

1. The current situation in Europe and Africa

Despite the structural difficulties affecting its political and economic integration process, Europe remains an important geostrategic space. With its democratic capital, institutional development, and economic potential, resulting from its single market, Europe is at the centre of the globalised system, even though its weight has weakened over the last decade.

Africa, on the other hand, is the land of opportunities given its youthful population, which requires proactive policies to turn this asset into a demographic dividend. The fact that the continent is underexploited makes its prospects for development very favourable.

Over the past two decades, Africa has become a high-stakes global strategic space attracting competition among traditional and emerging powers:

- Since 2000, Africa has enjoyed relatively sustained economic growth rates, averaging 4.5%, a performance superior to that of the world economy, which grew at an average rate of 3% over the same period.

- Africa is a reservoir of raw materials and natural resources. According to UNEP, the continent holds 40% of the world's gold reserves, 60% of its cobalt, 90% of its platinum, and 30% of all minerals on the planet. It is home to 80% of the world's phosphates, 58% of its diamonds, and 43% of its chromium (Source: Credit Suisse, May 2013). Africa also holds 8% of the world's oil and gas reserves (Source: US Energy Information Administration, 2012).
- The abundance of underutilised arable lands gives Africa great potential for contributing to global food security. According to the FAO, Africa harbours 60% of the world's non-cultivated lands.
- The significant needs and rapid growth of local populations make Africa a land of investment. The continent is making progress in bridging the gap with the rest of the world thanks to the emergence of democratic regimes, partial conflict resolution, and the dynamic role of regional and international development institutions ...

Well-managed population growth and better urban planning should act as levers for structural transformation and inclusive, sustainable economic development in Africa, a continent which has several advantages:

- An opportunity for accelerated industrialisation that would benefit African and European economic operators given the rising labour costs in emerging countries: Industrialisation alone is likely to create jobs and reduce the high dependency of African economies on raw materials and their vulnerability to exogenous shocks.
- The regional markets' development necessary for the emergence of competitive industries in the international market.
- An increasing demand for manufactured products.

2. Complementarities and shared challenges

In addition to their respective strengths, Europe and Africa have complementarities that are visible at least in three key areas:

- Demographically speaking, Europe is suffering from an aging population while Africa is experiencing high birth rates. The shortage of the working population in Europe could be met by African migration.
- In the field of energy, Africa is positioning itself as the main supplier of oil and natural gas to European countries. In addition to the existing gas pipelines crossing the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline project should boost interdependence between the two continents.
- Several European and African countries have cultural affinities because of their shared history. The relations established during the post-colonial era have made it possible to create a certain legal and regulatory proximity, even at the level of the institutional governance model.

In an international context, marked by profound changes, making the world of tomorrow both complex and uncertain, at least five major challenges face Europe and Africa. These challenges are geopolitical, economic, human, security-related and environmental.

- **The geopolitical challenge:** A gradual shift of the world's centre of gravity towards Asia could eventually affect Europe's positioning on the world stage and diminish its influence on the global agenda. It could further marginalise Africa if a structural transformation of its economy was not achieved.
- **The competitiveness challenge:** The emergence of a new world order is placing substantial competition pressures on national economies, in terms of domestic as well as third-party markets, especially from emerging Asian economies. The latter deploy aggressive strategies, based as much on access to raw materials as on conquering market shares in Europe and Africa.
- **The migration challenge:** It is represented by an increase in the movement of African populations towards Europe, in a context of socio-political instability in the Euro-Mediterranean region and the persistence of armed conflicts in Libya in particular. The issue of illegal migration, which is tackled by an approach that is more security-oriented than it is human-centred, remains a matter of concern, although the EU-Africa cooperation has helped alleviate this situation. Moreover, the rise of xenophobia in Europe and the African' brain drain represent serious problems for the both continents.
- **The security challenge:** The transnational threats are growing noticeably, including terrorism and organised crime. The growing hybridisation of these threats makes their interception complex and difficult to manage, for lack of effective and efficient regional and international cooperation. In particular, the increase in the number of terrorists from southern Mediterranean countries, as well as European countries joining "Daech" and extremist groups in Syria, Iraq and Libya is a major concern. The return of these terrorists exposes their countries to imminent risks, given their capacity to potentially cause trouble.

The development of activities related to piracy, as well as arms and drug trafficking affects the security of Africa and Europe, especially in a context where most African countries lack the capacities to cope with transnational threats. In addition to the continuing terrorist threat, border conflicts in Africa feed an arms race that puts a strain on public budgets to the detriment of vital human development needs.

- **The sustainable development challenge:** In addition to the severe damages to environmental balances, due to inappropriate production and consumption patterns, climate change places a strain on African countries' food, health, and economic security, and even threatens the survival of Mankind. As part of this issue, there is a significant gap between the adaptive capacities of European countries and African countries. An urgent global response is needed; a response that lives up to the existing challenges and to the hopes of the international community to see the actualisation of the World Climate Agreement reached in Paris in 2015 and of the measures of its implementation adopted in Marrakech in 2016. The seriousness of these challenges arises from the negative impacts they generate in terms of forced displacement of populations and the threat to food security.

3. Reflections on how to mobilise potential cooperation between Europe and Africa

Considering the aforementioned complementarities and the common challenges in both Europe and Africa, a new partnership vision between the two continents proves necessary. This vision,

which fosters the establishment of an interest-based community in several areas, will allow Europe and Africa in particular to improve their positioning on the international stage.

The new progress partnership to be established between Africa and Europe will have strong content regarding the geopolitical plan and an innovative economic perspective in order to create conditions for a new era of prosperity and co-development. The partnership should focus on cooperation based on human-centred migration policies and multidimensional security approaches.

At the same time, it is about laying the foundation for cooperation on sustainable development and steering scientific and technical cooperation towards human development. Finally, the partnership requires the involvement of non-governmental actors and civil society in fostering mutual understanding between people and establishing cooperation on a solid and sustainable foundation.

Developing geopolitical cooperation and extending it to areas of common interest

Geographic areas of common interest are namely the Euro-Mediterranean and the Atlantic areas.

As for the Euro-Mediterranean region, the two partners could contribute to accelerating the implementation of projects within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean, particularly those related to sustainable development, socio-economic integration of women and youth, and intercultural dialogue. They should also pool their efforts to support the political-transition process at work in the Southern-Mediterranean region, both democratically and institutionally.

Europe and Africa should work together to implement a European neighbourhood policy that promotes convergence between countries on both sides of the Mediterranean, and integrates it within the framework of a civilisational project where human, cultural, and security aspects are well taken into consideration. This neighbourhood policy should not be limited to the Maghreb countries, but also neighbours of neighbours, namely Sub-Saharan Africa and Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in order to benefit from the financial contribution of the latter, while supporting them in their economic diversification strategy.

European and African countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean should combine their efforts to contribute to the creation of a strategic partnership vision that would allow this region to regain its geostrategic centrality, which is likely to be compromised today by the rise of the Asia-Pacific region.

This multidimensional vision should be based on an economic partnership founded on port, industrial, and energy megaprojects, and an intense security cooperation in order to fight against all forms of crime in the Southern-Atlantic region.

To ensure its successful implementation, this vision should be carried out by the relevant institutional structures, and must take into account the specificities of each area of the Atlantic region, while being in line with the regional initiatives already underway. The organisation of the Conference of African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean could be the basis of this structure, at least on the African front.

Promoting innovative economic cooperation

The ambitions to establish an innovative partnership between Africa and Europe will focus on the structuring sectors able to respond to the priorities of African countries to accelerate their convergence and make them a sustainable growth partner for European countries.

Industry offers important opportunities for a win-win partnership. Strengthening the competitiveness of European countries against Asian competitors could happen through establishing major industrial projects in Africa and by creating joint-ventures, following an approach based on co-localisation.

Economic cooperation will foster dynamic commercial exchanges between Europe and Africa, which requires a modernisation and extension of African port infrastructures and their adaptation to the new requirements of international transportation (capacity to receive ships). This also requires the establishment of joint chambers of commerce and industry (information on markets, export/import opportunities, commercial prospecting missions...).

The acceleration of regional integration in Africa could reduce African economies' vulnerability, while generating supplements to economic growth that would benefit African and also European countries.

Establishing Constructive Cooperation on migration

The transition towards human-centred migration policies in Europe and Africa is proving to be essential. These policies should not only promote peace, security, and economic development in Africa's migrant-sending regions, but also advance these migrants' socio-economic inclusion in the European countries where they live.

It is necessary to preserve the human resources needed in African countries to support the development and emergence processes in these countries. Additionally, it will be desirable to foster circular migration and to mobilise the African community in Europe in order to make it an important source for bilateral and even triangular development and cooperation.

It is also a matter of ensuring a better integration of this African community, particularly the youth born in their host European countries. To this end, the socio-cultural context in European countries should recognise the rich identity of African nationals and their belonging to a dual value system.

A collaborative approach to cultural management would benefit from a proactive communication strategy based on the values of tolerance and coexistence, advocated by the Moroccan model of Islam which is considered today a reference in African countries.

Emphasising a multidimensional security cooperation to contain the proliferation of terrorist and criminal threats

A strictly national management of security challenges is now an illusion. The international support of national efforts in the fight against terrorism should be the norm, not the exception. This is why security cooperation between Europe and Africa should be boosted and made multidimensional in order to curb the insecurity threat in certain areas, namely in the Sahel region, which is the epicentre of international terrorism, and to avoid its aggravation.

This cooperation should reinforce capacities of vulnerable African countries in the prevention and fight against terrorist and criminal activities, through substantial financial resources and transfer of skills to improve security governance in these countries.

While the security response to the said challenges is essential, it is equally true that such response should be supported by a socio-economic approach to provide substantive responses to the factors generating insecurity and to the development of illegal activities.

Security cooperation between Europe and Africa should extend to emerging threats, including cybercrime in all its aspects, which is one of the channels favoured by extremists for their activities of youth indoctrination and recruitment.

Laying the foundations for cooperation in sustainable development

Numerous opportunities could be jointly explored by Europe and Africa, namely in the areas of water, food security, and renewable energies. Countries of the two continents should together promote emerging concepts such as the “blue economy” and “purple economy.” These two concepts are perfectly in line with the requirements of a development model that is economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

The adequate exploitation of African arable lands, combined with the technological expertise of European countries, could provide a proper solution to the global food security issue.

Developing the renewable energies sector could meet both the needs of Europe’s energy transition and Africa’s energy security. It could also meet the needs of climate change adaptation in African countries.

The Euro-African cooperation must also focus on the seventeen (17) new sustainable-development goals, adopted by the international community on September 2015.

Steering scientific and technical cooperation towards intangible-capital development

Developing human capital through introducing far-reaching reforms in African education systems, and building technological innovation capacities – which constitute two key components of intangible capital – are, indeed, levers to be utilised as part of the cooperation with Europe, to set African countries on the path of the future.

Special attention must be paid to education. In this regard, African countries could form a nexus, through hosting European higher-education institutions to meet a growing African demand for elite training.

The cultural dimension must have a crucial part in the Euro-African cooperation. The common future must be built on sharing universal values, democracy and progress.

Moreover, cooperation should be promoted between African and European research centres and universities to consider strategic issues concerning the common future and serve as a proposal force for decision-makers.

In addition to the inter-state cooperation, the contribution of private and non-governmental actors is important to promote mutual understanding of common issues.

Establishing a platform of civil-society actors would allow for the increase of cultural exchange and support the fight against negative perceptions on both sides.

4. How would Morocco contribute to building a common future between Africa and Europe?

Given its geographic location and its privileged relations with the international community, Morocco could contribute to set up close cooperation ties between Europe and Africa, with a view to build a common future with promising prospects. The Kingdom’s assets enable it to act as an important intermediary in this respect:

- The advancements achieved in terms of democratic transition and institutional governance could place Morocco in the forefront of the transfer of economic and institutional progress to its sub-Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan neighbours.
- In addition to the advanced status granted to Morocco by Europe, the Kingdom has signed over a thousand cooperation agreements with its Sub-Saharan partners, allowing it to effectively act as a regional hub in terms of trade, finance, transport, and education...
- Morocco enjoys a positive image in Africa, enabling it to lay the foundation of tripartite cooperation in several development sectors. Additionally, the return of the Kingdom to the African Union places it at the heart of the African decision-making process.
- Morocco is considered a credible partner of the international community in terms of solving global issues that are important for both Europe and Africa, namely immigration and security issues and those related to sustainable development.

Morocco could particularly contribute to the following areas:

Economic and financial areas

Given its growing experience, Morocco could help African partners to accelerate the diversification of their production systems, thus improving their integration in the global value chains. Establishing Moroccan-Euro-African joint-ventures could create several opportunities for European companies looking for external growth drivers.

The Kingdom could further contribute to the development of the financial system of African partner countries, through extending the activities of major Moroccan banks and diversifying their portfolios beyond classic banking activities. As a financial hub, Morocco could act as a sub-contractor in terms of the financial transactions adapted to the funding needs of African countries (sovereign and private bond issues, financial engineering...)

Social and training areas

Some successful Moroccan experiences, such as the National Initiative for Human Development, rural electrification, social housing, and social safety nets... could be beneficial for African countries, seeking to speed up their social development. They would also benefit the European donors involved in funding development projects in Africa.

Morocco, already involved in training African executives, through receiving numerous African students in its academic institutions, could enhance its supporting role in building their human capital. This could be achieved through the active presence of major Moroccan training groups in the continent, in partnership with European universities and prestigious schools.

Morocco is training *Imams* for some European and African countries. This action, which is part of defending the Islamic values of tolerance in line with the Maliki school, could be extended to other countries in Africa and Europe.

African countries could follow the example of Morocco, whose human-centred immigration policy allowed for regularising the situation of Sub-Saharan immigrants present on national soil, and considerably reducing the flow of illegal immigrants to Europe. The sustainability of such policy is, however, dependent on the European financial support and capacity building in terms of the socio-economic integration of Sub-Saharan immigrants).

Security area

In addition to its positive involvement in the operations aiming to promote peace and security at the regional and international levels, Morocco could share its multidimensional security approach with other African countries, an approach that places the safety of human beings at the heart of the issues that concern both Africa and Europe.

As for food security, OCP Group allocates part of its fertiliser production to the African market to help it improve its small-scale use of fertilisers: 10% of the global average and almost 20 times less than the Asian average.

Furthermore, sharing Moroccan expertise in drip irrigation and the development of export-oriented agro-industries could contribute to the emergence of a modern and competitive African agriculture.

The Moroccan initiative dubbed African Agriculture Adaptation (AAA), introduced during COP 22, could promote the implementation of concrete innovation projects in Africa, aiming to improve soil quality, control agricultural water use, and build capacities in climate-risk management.

In addition to its contribution to the implementation of rural electrification projects in African partner countries, Morocco could use the expertise it has gained – and is still gaining – in the area of renewable energy (namely solar power) as a potential basis for Euro-African cooperation in the field of energy.