

Towards a new partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries after 2020

PLATFORMA declaration

PLATFORMA – the network of local and regional governments for development cooperation between Europe and partner countries- and its members call on the institutions of the European Union and on its Member States to adopt the following recommendations in view of the revision of the EU-ACP cooperation framework in 2020 (Post-Cotonou)

- Considering that since 2000, the EU-ACP Partnership Agreement is the institutional and operational framework for cooperation between the European Union and 79 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. It is one of the most extensive agreements, addressing development, economic and trade and political cooperation. It is also one of the few EU development agreements that **include local and regional governments as key stakeholders**.
- Considering that, expiring in 2020, the current revision process must be the opportunity to **truly address the recent changes** in the international development agenda, and to go one step further in the involvement of local and regional governments in one of the major EU programme for development. A mere renewal of the existing agreement will not be sufficient.
- We call for a **widened Political Dialogue** that would institutionally involve local and regional governments through their representative platforms, acknowledge and build on their competences for development strategies at territorial level.
- We highlight that a **multi-stakeholder consultation mechanism** must be a major component of the architecture of the new framework, in order to define and implement development strategies in line with the needs and ambitions of local populations. The Territorial Approach to Development and subsidiarity must be also be key driving principles in designing the new cooperation framework.
- We call on Member States and partner countries **to commit to empower and strengthen local and regional governments' capacities**, to enable them carry out their responsibilities effectively and efficiently, and operate as meaningful agents for development.
- We stress that the new framework **must be supportive of decentralised cooperation** between EU and ACP local governments, as well as cross-border cooperation modalities within ACP regions, key elements for an enhanced development and peaceful societies at territorial level.
- We recommend **the creation of a dedicated instrument** under the new framework, to grant direct financial support to local and regional governments' projects for territorial, economic and human development

Narrative

- **Institutionalisation of the role of local and regional governments (LRGs) through their associations in the EU-ACP Political Dialogue.** LRGs' respective platforms from EU and ACP countries and regions must actively participate in the discussions and debates of the joint EU-ACP institutions. They will reflect at the Political Dialogue level, the priorities and constraints of local development strategies. It will therefore be necessary that the new framework opens transparent spaces for information and participation. The Political Dialogue must be a place to address governance issues and promote an agenda of reforms to deepen the roots of democracy at local level.
- **Local authorities must be directly eligible to the development aid** under this framework. We advocate that specific financial instruments be developed under the new partnership agreement for bottom-up accountability mechanisms, and decentralisation of budget support. European local and regional governments and their associations' must also be eligible to these facilities in order to support decentralization process and capacity building of local and regional governments in ACP countries.
- **Associations of local and regional governments must be involved in national dialogues** on development strategies. Local and regional governments are key actors implementing and generating local impacts of development strategies agreed at national, regional or international levels. It is therefore necessary to involve local and regional governments as early as in the design phase of development plans and projects. International donors must also be accountable to the local authorities and work according the development strategies decided at local level. These provisions must be included in the political framework of the future EU-ACP partnership.
- **Multi-level governance and multi-stakeholders mechanisms of consultation must be fostered** by the new framework for cooperation, to ensure that local governments and their associations are included in the definition and implementation of development strategies, and consulted on laws and regulations that affect them. LRGs and their associations should also be strengthened to play this role. Bottom up processes to define development needs and challenges should be put in place to ensure more impact of the Partnership on the ground. Given the EU experience on subsidiarity and multi-level governance, local governments and their associations from Europe can play an important role in supporting the local governments and their associations in ACP countries.
- In order to respect and implement the **principles of Development Effectiveness: inclusive partnerships, coordination, complementarity and coherence** - the role of local and regional governments and of decentralised cooperation must be enhanced in the coordination of development actions. Especially through:
 - Supporting the creation of mechanisms and frameworks such as Institutional Concertation Frameworks, or Frameworks for the Organisation of Regional Development, in order to **put into practice the methodology of dialogue and multi-stakeholder concertation**. These mechanisms contribute to lay the foundations for a better coordination between the main actors of local development, ensuring citizens' participation in the implementation of local development policies.
 - **Creation of "Cooperation cells" at local and regional level** to better manage and coordinate between the state, local and regional governments and civil society, the flux of information related to local development planning, cooperation activities, and partnership opportunities.

- **Promoting the integration of decentralised cooperation in local development planning**, in accordance with the concertation process.
- **Decentralised cooperation must be included as a mean for implementation** of development programmes under the future EU-ACP cooperation framework. Local government's capacity development; twinning; peer-to-peer partnerships, are appropriate forms of partnership between EU and partner countries, enabling for real sharing of expertise and know-how between peers. These partnerships have a positive impact **on democratic governance**, and **social cohesion** at local level. It is an efficient way to bring closer communities from both regional groupings and foster cultural but also youth and professional exchanges. In addition city-to-city / region-to-region cooperation ensure **ownership** of local governments and local populations on the programmes implemented in their territories, they build on the needs assessed by partners themselves and adapt to specific territorial contexts.
- The EU-ACP framework **must primarily focus on decentralisation and empowerment** of local government in ACP countries. An efficient decentralisation framework, with clear core powers and responsibilities and transfer of corresponding financial resources ensures that local and regional governments can carry out their responsibilities effectively and efficiently. Especially since the local level is the closest to the citizens and development progress made at local level are immediately perceived by the population.
- **Empowerment of local and regional governments must be a priority** of the EU-ACP new framework for cooperation. In order to fulfil their mandates - especially the delivery of public services - local and regional governments need to be empowered with the relevant competencies. Fiscal decentralisation and effective taxation system are also important to empower financially local authorities and provide them with appropriate financial means to conduct their missions. **Associations of local and regional governments** in ACP countries should be supported and further strengthened to develop their potential for training of officials (both technical and political), for lobby towards central government, for providing services and providing a platform of exchange for local governments, etc. Building sustainable communities requires a strong foundation, which enables local governments to truly operate as agents for development, as catalysts for economic growth, as advocates for social justice and equity.
- **Domestic resources mobilisation and eradication of illicit financial flows are critical** to support ACPs own development. The two dimensions must be at the centre of the ACP cooperation policies. The new framework must enhance local governments' capacities to effectively levy local taxes. **Fiscal decentralization** contributes to improving domestic resources mobilisation, particularly by strengthening local taxation on property and capture of land added-value (strengthening the legal framework and local capacities). A more transparent and efficient transfer of financial resources from national to local level will be strategic to support local development and basic services delivery, **reducing the inequalities between territories**.
- **Territorial approach to local development (TALD)** - that is, an inclusive approach integrating all territorial stakeholders in local development strategies - must be adopted in the EU-ACP cooperation framework. Local and regional governments can **coordinate** the action of territorial stakeholders (civil society organisations, local businesses, schools and universities, etc.) towards a common development strategy for their territory, to create synergies and avoid dispersion of efforts and resources. In this regard, cooperation between local governments and civil society organisations is particularly efficient to strengthen **participatory mechanisms**. TALD is particularly relevant to **reduce inequalities within a country**, and it is an approach that respect differentiation principle and adapt to territorial specificities.

- The new cooperation framework **must build on the ability of local and regional governments to ensure human development** at the local level, and to reduce inequalities among their populations through better social inclusion in local life of most vulnerable populations such as women, elderly, young, disabled people, etc. The new framework must therefore support local social policies, and foster a human rights and gender sensitive approach.
- **A holistic and cross-cutting approach to private sector development**, based on the respect of public services and social regulations must be adopted. It must support local and regional governments to create a favourable environment for **local economic development**, and ensure that it **benefits citizens**. Local authorities' policies towards local businesses can play a significant leverage role for a more favourable investment environment, especially with the following preliminary conditions:
 - Security of property and predictability
 - Coherent territorial and land planning
 - Transparency and accountability of administrations
 - Fiscal and administrative decentralisation
 - Local procurement policies
 - Access to local markets
- With respect to the **principle of subsidiarity**, we recall that local and regional governments have competencies in a broad range of policies linked with development, and therefore EU-ACP cooperation projects must systematically include local and regional governments and their associations when addressing the following challenges:
 - Water, sanitation and health
 - Electricity delivery, energy efficiency
 - Waste management
 - Environmental challenges (reduction of carbon emission, adaptation to the effects of climate change, promotion of climate-respectful behaviour, management and protection of natural resources, etc.)
 - Sustainable urban infrastructures, public transports
 - Social integration of vulnerable groups (youth, women, elderly, refugees); awareness raising and education of populations on development issues
 - Local economic development
 - Disaster risk reduction and management
 - Settlement of land disputes; access to local markets; facilitation of agricultural chains; etc.
- **Ensure peace and stability from the local level in ACP countries.** Local governments can facilitate peaceful dialogues between communities, thus reducing in-country or cross-border conflicts. They also play an important role in state-building from the grassroots level, contributing to better stability. In some cases a local approach to peace-building - through mediation between different communities, enhancement of the role of local governments in peacebuilding, community policing, etc. - can prove to be the most efficient solution.
- **Cross-border cooperation** and decentralised partnerships between local and regional governments from ACP countries must be supported. As well as any initiative taken at the local level aiming at peace-building, and more economic and cultural exchanges between the communities in ACP regions. **The European experience**, not necessarily being a model to replicate literally, may be a source of inspiration to boost cross-border cooperation in ACP countries. We call on the EU to support a reflection on the implementation of cross-border cooperation and provide financial **support for the implementation of pilot projects for cross-**

border cooperation in ACP countries. Tripartite cooperation (e.g. UE-ACP-ACP) between local governments within a regional grouping and from the EU can also foster efficient solutions to tackle common challenges.

- **Local authorities often play a critical role in ensuring humanitarian assistance.** In case of disaster local governments should be identified as the relevant actor for coordination of the humanitarian aid.
- The EU-ACP framework should be a **forum to address migration** not only as a North/South issue, but **also as a South/South challenge**. Providing refugees with shelter and basic services, but also social inclusion and life perspectives, are challenges that imply an important role from local governments, especially in countries neighbouring conflict areas. EU and ACP local governments must be invited through their associations to policy discussions on migration. **Exchanges between European and ACP local governments on migration** and human mobility will be key to strengthen both communities, support the integration of refugees and ensure that they get access to basic service delivery.
- The post-Cotonou framework **must focus on challenges that risk to halve the progress on poverty eradication and which are root causes of instability**. The following issues must be prioritized:
 - Strengthening **democratic governance** and fight against corruption **at all levels**. A solid democratic system can significantly improve the legitimacy and credibility of local governments.
 - Empowerment and **capacity building** of local governments
 - **Urbanisation**, sustainable management of cities and slums upgrading.
 - Reducing poverty and territorial **inequalities**, included in the most “developed” ACP countries.
 - **Peace** and stability between communities as prerequisite for development.
 - Ensuring access to **basic services**, food security, access to water
 - Environmental sustainability, resilient communities and fight against **climate change** and its effects. Diplomatic efforts on climate-related negotiation must be a strong component of the political dialogue between the EU and the ACP group of states. Local and regional governments are part of this diplomatic nexus as they can help achieving ambitious commitments if their needs are taken into consideration.
 - Job creation
- The new EU-ACP framework **must be consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, and help ACP countries to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Since ACP countries - and particularly Africa - are experiencing an **intensive urbanization process**¹, more specific attention must be devoted to the **goal 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable"** to upgrade slums, improve access to basic services and infrastructures, strengthen urban planning, build resilient local communities and promote sustainable urban environmental policies. Sustainable urbanization policies have a **direct impact on economic growth**, and should be accompanied with targeted action to support and promote the integration of urban informal workers. Urbanisation policies should take in account both metropolitan areas and intermediary cities to promote a more balanced territorial development and encourage local development **strengthening urban-rural linkages**.

¹ UNDP “World Urbanisation Prospect” of 2014

<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf>

- **PLATFORMA, the association of European local and regional governments for development cooperation** gathers actors active in development cooperation. This expertise and experience can be made available for the EU-ACP cooperation framework.

PLATFORMA is the network of local and regional governments (LRGs), and their associations, active in the field of development cooperation between Europe and partner countries. PLATFORMA has 34 members: national, European and international associations, as well individual local and regional governments. The Secretariat is hosted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (more information on www.platforma-dev.eu).

Since its launch, PLATFORMA has actively engaged with the European institutions to inform and constructively participate in shaping the EU development policy with two main objectives; i. strengthening EU support to local governance in partner countries and, ii. strengthening EU support to decentralised cooperation as an implementation means of development cooperation.

In 2015, PLATFORMA signed a Strategic partnership with the European Commission Directorate-General for International Development and Cooperation, whereby signatories commit to take actions based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and inequality, and to promote democracy and sustainable development.