

# **Fostering Human Security and Resilience in the future EU-Africa Partnership. The role of local communities.**

**Webinar 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020**



The report found below summarises the outcome of the discussions held during the webinar of 15 October 2020. This summary aims at identifying different perceptions of:

- i) the strategies to foster human security and resilience through the EU- Africa partnership.
- ii) the scope to strengthen and broaden the voice and participation of African local communities and faith-based actors in decision-making, norm-setting and governance of the future partnership, notably in light of the 6th AU-EU Summit planned for 2021.

Before presenting the conclusions drawn from the webinar the report provides a brief reflection on the background of policy-discussions on the EU-Africa partnership that led to the organisation of this webinar. The report also includes a section on “**stories of resilience**”, which summarises the testimonies by speakers from different African countries on the role of local communities and faith-based actors and their endeavours in building resilient and peaceful societies. Similarly, in “**remarks by EU decision makers**” a summary of contributions made by EU decision makers is presented.

## The Future EU-Africa partnership

Building a **partnership of equals** with Africa is a high priority for the European Union in 2020, as European Commission President von der Leyen emphasised in her State of the Union speech of 16 September. The EU-Africa partnership is however not only a matter of governments and intergovernmental institutions. In line with the 2030 Agenda principles and with the EU’s commitment to create a **people-centred partnership**, it should also count on the participation of all stakeholders and all people, including meaningful contributions from Church and civil society actors. It is of paramount importance to broaden and strengthen the voice and participation of African local communities and faith-based actors in decision-making, norm-setting and governance of the future partnership, notably in light of the 6th AU-EU Summit planned for 2021.

One of the future priority areas of cooperation in the renewed EU-Africa partnership is **resilience**. In particular, the European Commission and the European External Action Service propose that future EU-Africa cooperation focuses on securing resilience

*“by linking humanitarian aid, development, peace and security interventions at all stages of the cycle of conflicts and crises.”*

In that context, the webinar on “*Fostering Human Security and Resilience in the future EU-Africa partnership: the role of local communities*” was co-organised by **COMECE, CIDSE, JRS, CARITAS Europa , AEFJN, DON BOSCO International and SANT’EGIDIO**.

In his introductory remarks' **Fr Manuel Barrios Prieto**, General Secretary of COMECE, took the ongoing COVID-19 crisis to exemplify its wide-ranging socio-economic consequences.

*"The current pandemic exposes our human fragility hitting the most vulnerable members of our societies in Europe and in our neighbouring continent Africa above all in regions with weaker healthcare and social systems."*

**Fr Barrios** continued by saying that

*"the interconnected challenges of today require a fostering of global solidarity"*

as highlighted by **Pope Francis** in his recently published encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

*"Solidarity finds concrete expression in service" the Pope says, "which can take a variety of forms in an effort or care for others, caring for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people."*

Adding **Fr Barrios** that,

*"the principle of solidarity cannot be separated from the principle of subsidiarity."*

The latter articulates the need for a solidarity *"in which public institutions empower and support initiatives arising from the grassroots level."* **A people centred partnership** between the EU and Africa should focus on enabling local communities to become stakeholders to effectively participate in decision-making and in the implementation of policies. Indeed, the role of local religious and faith-based actors has been repeatedly recognised by the European Parliament as well as by the Council in its conclusions on **an integrated approach to external conflicts and crises** in providing local knowledge and initiative as part of early warning and resilience-fostering mechanisms.

## Stories of resilience from Africa

In stories of resilience from Africa, speakers from different African countries shared best practices to illustrate the role of local communities and of local faith-based actors and their endeavours in building resilient and peaceful societies.

**Mrs Gertrude Chimange**, *coordinator of CCJP-Mutare, Zimbabwe*

emphasised the need for a **coherent approach** on logistics and humanitarian aid from the governmental authorities for the local people whenever external forces such as the wide-ranging effects of climate change hit local communities. Her input stressed the importance of building, supporting and empowering community resilience, as key response to external factors and central to reshaping the role and functions of rural areas.

**Rev Fr Mc Donald Nah**, *director of Caritas Liberia*

referred to *"Peace, reconciliation and conflict in Liberia"*, a study which was conducted by caritas member *Catholic Relief Services (CRS)*. The results of the study articulated the feelings, perceptions, thoughts and opinions of Liberians and it revealed that **social cohesion** was a priority for the country to overcome the deep division from the enduring distress, hurt and hatred that was sown by the civil war. To further the goal of sustainable communities and peace, CRS developed a tool called *CRS Innovative 3Bs/4Ds Methodology* which proved to be a sustainable path to genuine peace and social cohesion.

**Mr Samuel Mwangi** *from Kenya, entrepreneur, and past VET (Vocational Education and training) pupil*

accompanied his intervention with a video on a Don Bosco town ( a VET centre from the Don Bosco Tech African network in Nairobi) and **underlined the importance of education and more specifically vocational training** to empower children from vulnerable families and to offer opportunities for a better future. He also highlighted the importance of EU-funded pilot projects such as *the Supporting Alliance for African Mobility (SAAM)* fostering mobility between Africa and Europe through VET.

**Ms Nazik Hamat Djido** *fled South Sudan as a girl and currently is a refugee at Iridimi (Chad)*

completed school and now she is a Primary teacher in a program supported by JRS. Ms Nazik gave testimony of the value of education to empower girls and women in local communities and refugee camps alike.

**Mrs Victoria Madedor**, *Business Development Consultant*

shared her expertise in providing capacity support for networks of family farmers in Nigeria. She illustrated how local farmers face problems such as poor infrastructure, insufficient cold storage and inexistent power supply and how the local communities solve these problems. She concluded that *"It has become the responsibility of players in the private and public sectors*

*to help farmers and build resilience and this can only be done with collaboration and smart innovation”.*

A striking opportunity for Europe-based stakeholders to listen to an African grassroots voice, came from **Mr Prosper N’ Douba**.

He shared his concrete experiences on the current conflict that is ravaging local communities in the Central African Republic. In this context, he explained the work of *Sant’Egidio* in Africa with regards to **peace mediation, interreligious dialogue**, and its endeavours to undertake initiatives under the framework of EU-African relations aiming at fostering resilient communities and **applying a human security approach**.

## Remarks by EU decision makers

Speakers from EU institutions acknowledged the importance of reliable sources, the role of local communities, local faith-based actors, and Churches in their efforts to foster resilience and human security.

According to **MEP Lukas Mandl (EPP)**, EU-relations with Africa are a core question to Europe. MEP Mandl wishes not to focus on a policy framework only. He advocates for a sustainable approach.

*“Europe has ample reasons to work together, reach out, find mutual understanding and establish joint action with its neighbouring continent Africa”*

Therefore, international cooperation with Africa requires mutual action and economic space for self-development. The latter implies *“the rule of law”* beyond rhetoric, and beyond aid and economic investment.

**Mr Mario Ronconi** *Head of the Unit for Resilience and Fragility at DG DEVCO* outlined the policy framework of the future EU- Africa partnership. One of the priority areas of the European Commission in the EU-Africa partnership is resilience.

*“The future EU-African relationship not only requires humanitarian and development aid, it also implies ‘security’ Military support is not sufficient for peace and development and can sometimes harm peace-developing actions.” “Thus peace mediation carried out by local faith-based organisations play a vital role to understand the root of fragility and conflicts and to comprehend the situation of communities locally.”*

**Mr Irchad Razaaly**, *Head of Division for West Africa at the European External Action Service (EEAS)* puts resilience and security high on the shared EU- African agenda.

*“The year 2020 and 2021 are pivotal in the EU- African strategic relations not only by the ongoing consultations between the EU and the AU, but because in light of the 6th AU- EU Summit beyond policy making, we are supporting the direct needs of real people with real stories.*

## Conclusion

This webinar offered a platform to hold a discussion that went beyond state resilience and state security. It illustrated **a broader concept of resilience, which encompasses all persons and the whole of society and highlighted the concept of human security.**

Given the relevance of EU-Africa cooperation in these areas, recognizing that significant progress in fostering resilient societies and in applying a human security approach still needs to be made, this webinar shed light upon the importance of **supporting and promoting the role of local and faith-based actors and communities** as important contributors to achieve these objectives.

The participating speakers from different African countries, who shared local initiatives undertaken in various fields and policy areas, illustrated how local communities and faith-based actors play a role in **building resilience and human security.**

Their stories of resilience focused on how the root causes of conflict, instability and lack of **social cohesion** can be addressed at **grassroots level**, through community engagement and building upon the resourcefulness of local and faith-based actors.

EU decision-makers acknowledged the role of local communities, local faith-based actors, Churches, and their efforts to foster resilience and human security. The future EU-African relationship not only requires humanitarian and development aid, it also implies **security and peace.** Therefore, **peace mediation** in conflict areas and a peace- building policy is part of a **global political framework** encompassing the future EU-African partnership to establish **safe, resilient, and sustainable communities** in Africa. The years ahead are crucial and will determine the EU- Africa strategic relations.

Can the postponement of the 6th annual AU-EU Summit to 2021, inspire African and European decision-makers to generate a people-centred partnership based on common interests and solidarity beyond development aid, rhetoric, and economic growth? For this will mark the EU's credibility and its efforts to include local African communities and faith-based actors and their role in decision-making, norm-setting, and governance in the future EU-African partnership.