



Summary
Online Discussion 22.6.2020

The Africa policy priorities of the German EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020

Background: This year will determine the future course of European-African relations. The *EU Commission* has presented the draft for a new EU-Africa strategy, which should pave the way for the EU-AU summit in autumn 2020. The Cotonou Agreement on cooperation with the ACP countries expired at the beginning of the year. In addition, the *EU's Sahel Strategy* is to be adapted and new financing instruments introduced. Germany will take over the *EU Council Presidency* on 1 July. This already demanding task in view of current challenges is becoming even more explosive due to the serious effects of the Corona crisis and the growing strategic commitment of third countries. Against this background, the *German Africa Foundation* invited its members to discuss the African policy priorities of the German *EU Council Presidency*.

Highlights:

- **Africa is an important foreign policy priority of the German EU Presidency.**
- **The Covid-19 pandemic has predominantly economic consequences on the African continent - these must be cushioned by multilateral measures such as debt relief.**
- **The Covid-19 crisis intensifies systemic competition with China in Africa. Europe and Germany must find an answer to this.**
- **The key to a successful partnership between Africa and Europe is a coherent strategy that is not only based on plans and intentions, but initiates coordinated projects and can achieve measurable success.**

According to **Robert Dölger**, a rethinking of German foreign policy has been evident for several years: The

Welcome Remarks

Dr Uschi Eid

President of the *German Africa Foundation*

Impulse

Ambassador Robert Dölger

Regional Representative for Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel at the *Federal Foreign Office*

Discussion

Volkmar Klein MP

Development Policy Spokesman of the *CDU/CSU* parliamentary group

Omid Nouripour MP

Foreign Policy Spokesman of the *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* parliamentary group

Ambassador Robert Dölger

Regional Representative for Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel at the *Federal Foreign Office*

Moderation

David Schwake

Secretary General of the *German Africa Foundation*

African continent is increasingly moving into focus. One example is the revision of the German government's Africa policy guidelines in 2019. Germany will continue to treat the African continent as a foreign policy priority during its *EU* Presidency. At *EU* level, a similar change towards a closer and above all jointly shaped partnership with Africa has become apparent since the presentation of the new *EU* Strategy for Africa in March this year, too. The *AU-EU* summit is to take place in autumn 2020, the post-Cotonou negotiations and the negotiations on the *EU* financial framework are to be concluded by the end of the year. The summit was to be prepared by a meeting of foreign ministers. However, as **Dölger** explained, these plans could only be partially implemented due to the outbreak of Covid-19. It was still open whether the meeting of foreign ministers and the summit will take place in person or virtually.

It is true that efforts are being made to intensify cooperation with Africa, particularly in the Covid-19 crisis. The *EU* had provided around 3 billion euros to fight the pandemic in Africa. However, the spread of Covid-19 led to a number of incalculable variables: For example, the cost to Europe of rebuilding the European economy. A number of African countries have also come under extreme economic and financial pressure due to the collapse of the oil prices, the crisis in tourism and the decline in remittances from the diaspora. In this respect, the financial scope for restructuring *EU-AU* relations is not great. To relieve the burden on African countries, Germany and the *EU* continued to advocate a debt moratorium, as **Dölger** stressed.

Volkmar Klein MP also cautioned against underestimating the economic consequences in Africa and their impact on European-African relations: According to **Klein**, a central challenge was the threat of disinvestment on the African continent: especially small and medium-sized enterprises, which carried a high risk, would reduce their economic involvement in Africa during the Covid-19 crisis. This had to be counteracted. The promotion of development and security in Africa would continue to be in Europe's interest since Europe's security, for example through an increasing threat of terrorism, also depends directly on the situation in Africa.

The current crisis should not be used to weaken the rights of civil society, **Omid Nouripour** stressed. **Dölger** explained that Germany regards the promotion of civil society as a priority. Furthermore, the question of (legal) migration is at the core of the German *EU* Council Presidency. Germany is committed to concretely implementable agreements and projects.

The Covid-19 crisis also showed the extent to which Europe and Germany are competing in a systemic competition with China in Africa: With the high-profile delivery of protective clothing and test kits to more than 40 African countries, China has launched a massive propaganda offensive to which Germany and the *EU* must respond, **Dölger** said. **Nouripour**, too, criticised China's so-called mask diplomacy and suggested strategically expanding cooperation with long-standing partners such as India on the African continent. Overall, **Klein** concluded that visible European successes in Africa were needed to counter Chinese influence. To achieve this, China's enormous commitment in the infrastructure sector would have to be embedded in a positive overall concept.

Currently, Europe and Africa are focusing above all on minimising the economic and social impact of the corona pandemic. Against this background, **Dölger** emphasised that strengthening the multilateral system was central. In this respect, Africa is an important partner. Germany supported in particular international organisations such as the *WHO*, the *WFP*, the *Global Vaccine Alliance* and the *United Nations* with large amounts of money. Cooperation with African regional organisations would also be intensified. **Nouripour** agreed with this and at the same time, pointed to the great regional differences on the African continent, which made different responses necessary. All in all, a joint and coherent European approach to Africa was central. However, this was another challenge of the German *EU Council* Presidency - regardless of the Covid-19 crisis. The dispute between France and Italy about the right policy on Libya showed how far Europe has yet to go towards a common foreign policy, said **Nouripour**.

Nouripour regretted that the new concept of the *Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)* "BMZ 2030" would turn the *BMZ* into a pure "Africa ministry". Apparently, the *Federal Foreign Office* had hardly been involved in designing the concept. This assumption was also expressed by **MP von Holtz**, who complained about the lack of coordination within the Federal Government. In addition, **Nouripour** said he missed the topic of climate partnerships. With regard to agriculture, it was striking that the problem of subsidising the European agricultural market was not addressed, although it has enormous effects on the development of agriculture in Africa.

With regard to the post-Cotonou negotiations, **Dölger** regretted that it was not possible to overcome the diverging interests between the Maghreb states and sub-Saharan Africa, which would have made it possible to conclude an intercontinental treaty. It was therefore important to make progress on the agendas and issues, for example in the context of support for the *African Free Trade Area*.