



# REPORT

## Future Africa-Europe High Level Forum 2024

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## Future Africa-Europe Time for a Paradigm Shift in Cross Continental Cooperation

### Context

On the 6th of November, the Future Africa-Europe High Level Forum was organized by the Africa-Europe Foundation in collaboration with Friends of Europe and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation in Brussels, Belgium.

The event focused on Europe and Africa's partnership, emphasizing the need for stronger cross-continental cooperation through sustainable investment. Through discussions on infrastructure funding, health and pandemic preparedness, AI development, ocean governance, and sustainable finance, the forum explored how a strong and equal alliance between Africa and Europe remains the most effective way to resolve the challenges that both continents face today.

### Introduction & Opening Remarks by Macky Sall, former president of Senegal and Co-Chair of the EU-AU summit

**Mr. Macky Sall** delivered the opening remarks for the event, reflecting on the historical partnership between Africa and Europe. The former president of Senegal emphasized the importance of analyzing their cross-continental relationship beyond its challenges, highlighting the potential benefits that both continents can gain from their **mutual collaboration**. Mr. Sall also underlined the distinctiveness of Africa and Europe's relationship, mentioning the historical, cultural, and linguistic ties that connect both continents.

The former president highlighted the emergence of **new dynamics** that appear to challenge both continents' partnership. Some considerations include the emergence of a new youth population in Africa, Europe's reorientation of its own priorities, the rise of demographic challenges in Europe, a changing geopolitical landscape, and climate change disruptions in both regions. Given such factors, Mr. Sall called for a change in methods and processes as a tool to develop a strong and forward-looking alliance.



The **Global Gateway** was mentioned as being an essential resource in further developing the key relationship between both continents, especially in areas concerning peace and security, resource mobilization, and the fight against illicit financial flows. Nevertheless, Mr. Sall underlined the importance of an evaluation of development policies free of cultural conditionalities. He promoted a **partnership focused on investment**, rather than aid, highlighting the need for Africa to move its own resources and exploit more

opportunities in the **private sector**.

Mr. Sall ended his speech by underscoring the mutual benefit of a developed Africa, describing the continent's socio-economic advancement as a mechanism to solve some of today's most critical challenges. The former Senegalese president concluded by calling for a paradigm shift that could



view both continents as equal partners, ensuring stronger collaboration towards a path of shared growth and prosperity.

- **Financing our Future: Reimagining Global Financial Frameworks and Enhancing Cooperation for Sustainable Development**

The first panel of the event focused on the need for strengthening **domestic resource mobilization** as a means for Africa to mobilize \$1.3 trillion to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The panel involved **Dr. Donald Kaberuka** Co-chair of the Council on State fragility and Former President of the African Development Bank, **Arancha González Laya**, former Foreign Affairs Minister of Spain, **Simon Mordue**, Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service, **Myriam Ferran**, Deputy Director General of DG International Partnerships, and **Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli**, President and CEO of the One Campaign who moderated the panel.



The four panel speakers emphasized the need to reform the **International Financial Architecture** as a tool for Africa to achieve its development targets.

Dr. Kaberuka underlined the critical state of Africa's debt, stressing the continent's big financial dependency. The former president of the African Development Bank expressed the need for **interest restructuring**, pointing out that current risk mechanisms are not working. As explained by Dr. Kaberuka, **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** and **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** fall short in satisfying Africa's development goals. Therefore, there is a necessity to adjust Africa and Europe's financial interdependence, with the aim to put an end to the cycle of debt and aid. Dr. Kaberuka emphasized the importance of **de-risking** private sector investments, especially in the areas of infrastructure. Moreover, he stressed the key role of trade as a vector of development and the importance of the infrastructure and energy sectors for developing it. As previously mentioned, domestic resource mobilization was mentioned to be a key potential driver for Africa's sustainable growth, and both Dr. Kaberuka and Simon Mordue reaffirmed the need for leveraging Africa's internal assets to make this resource mobilization possible. Both speakers stressed the need for an **improved tax administration** system in the continent, strengthened transparency, and the elimination of **illicit financial flows**.

During discussions on reforming the International Financial Architecture, calls were made by the four speakers to strengthen the voice of African countries in international financial organizations. The panelists stressed the importance of giving African countries more seats on the IMF and World Bank boards. An **increased representation** of African countries in the chairs of multilateral organizations was expressed to be a key factor to ensure that the continent would have a stronger voice in passing measures that align with its necessities.



Arancha González Laya and Myriam Ferran underlined the multi-faceted interdependence that Africa and Europe share, explaining that a **strengthened cooperation based on symmetry** is key in helping Africa achieve its development goals and financial requirements. The two panelists identified productive partnership areas that could contribute in solving some of the two continents' most critical challenges. For instance, leveraging Africa's increasing youth population with Europe's aging demographic was described to be a source of mutual growth and prosperity. Moreover, increased European



savings were conveyed to be another important source of capital for infrastructure development projects in Africa.

As discussed earlier, the leveraging of domestic African assets was repeatedly highlighted as a key determinant in achieving sustainable growth in the continent. The panel concluded by proposing specific measures such as the issuance of **Green Bonds** for infrastructure and green development, the issuance of **Diaspora bonds** to harness the incremental value of diaspora remittances, the increase of lending capacities by replenishing the **International Development Association (IDA)**, and the minimization or even elimination of Illegal Financial Flows by closely tracking these flows alongside European professionals.

- **Long-view Leadership**

The second panel of the event focused on the long-view leadership of Africa and Europe. The conversation shed light on the demographic and political changing landscape of both continents, and the way in which to harness different social and economic factors as a tool to strengthen cooperation between the two regions. The panel was led by **President Mary Robinson**, Co-President of the Africa-Europe Foundation and Former President of Ireland, and **Bora Kamwanya**, Vice President of the Pan African Youth Union.

During their conversation, both panelists emphasized the importance for Africa and Europe to develop a **long-view common leadership strategy** based on the development of sustainable policies, hope, and mutual understanding. Mr. Kamwanya shed light on the historical ties of both continents, stressing that their relationship throughout time has neither been based on friendship nor equality. Therefore, he called for a paradigm shift where the alliance between both regions could be based on understanding and balance. The Vice President of the Pan African Youth Union underlined the importance of understanding **the youth** of both territories, focusing on the young populations' trends, patterns, resources and necessities. As done by previous panelists, he noted the fast demographic changes taking place in both continents, characterized by the rapid rise of a youth population in Africa and the prospect of a mostly aging European society in the future. Providing insights into these demographic trends, Mr. Kamwanya underlined the importance of cross-continental collaboration through, for instance, the leveraging of knowledge-sharing and the implementation of cross-cultural projects among young people to pave the way for a new dimensional partnership.

Agreeing with Mr. Kamwanya, President Mary Robinson also emphasized the importance of youth engagement and participation in decision-making organisms, stressing out the necessity for elders to give a seat at the table to young people. Both speakers expressed the need for creating a **balanced and democratic cross-continental partnership**, focused on sustainability and **youth empowerment**. As concluded, mutual understanding and the implementation of a common leadership pathway that respects the resources and needs of both regions is the only reliable approach to sustain peace, democracy, and prosperity.





- **The Future of Industrialisation: Reconciling Climate, Development and Global Trade**

The third panel delved into the interdependence of Africa and Europe's **socio-economic objectives**, focusing on how to harmonize the EU's interests with Africa's development goals. The panel discussion explored the dimensions of climate change, economic development and global trade. The conversation was led by four speakers, **Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki**, African Union Special Envoy for Food Systems and former Prime Minister of Niger, **Pedro Manuel Moreno**, Deputy Secretary-General of UN Trade and Development, **Catherine Chabaud**, Former Member of the European Parliament and co-initiator of the Manifesto for a European Ocean Pact, and **H.E. Edgard Razafindravahy**, secretary general of the IOC. The panel was moderated by **Carlijn Nowen**, Co-founder of the Climate Action Platform for Africa.

The panel started by discussing some of the present challenges faced by the EU's **agricultural and industrial landscape**, particularly in the areas of **decarbonisation targets** and fast evolving political developments. As Europe aims to transition away from **fossil fuels**, it must particularly consider key factors, particularly concerning its economic ties with Africa. As a significant portion of trade between the two continents is centered on gas, oil, and minerals, concern has been raised regarding the consequences that a decrease in European demand for fossil fuels could have on Africa's trade, and subsequent economic development.



Dr. Mayaki insisted on the significance of designing **common strategies** for energy cooperation. He emphasized the importance of harnessing Africa's critical minerals and untapped renewable energy potential, and of combining with Europe's expertise in energy, financial resources, and technological knowledge, to achieve the **energy transformation** goals of both continents. Nevertheless, he stressed out the importance of maintaining balanced expectations that would consider Africa's historical struggle and effort in providing energy access to its population. The African Union Special Envoy for Food Systems also underlined the importance of industrialisation and the Green transition as a mechanism of development for Africa, particularly in facilitating **job creation**.

Mr. Moreno also defined the Green transition and industrialisation as a catalyst of opportunities for the African continent. Focusing on commercial implications, Mr. Moreno emphasized the critical role of raw material processing in boosting intra-African trade, highlighting that **public infrastructure investment**, supported by domestic asset mobilization, is a key driver in this process. Low access to technology and the lack of robust governance structures were identified to be one of the main challenges in the transition towards Africa's own processing of raw materials, however, such obstacles were recognized to be a door for collaboration between Europe and Africa. Delving into the trade opportunities offered by the Green transition, Mr. Moreno highlighted the potential for trade flows in Africa to increase by 175% in the following years. The African **Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, was also identified as being an instigator for trade and investment.

Catherine Chabaud highlighted the importance of the **blue economy** between Europe and Africa. Underlying the necessity to protect oceans and the biodiversity it offers. Efforts in minimizing pollution and in decarbonizing marine infrastructure were agreed to be better tackled through a strengthened **ocean partnership** by the two regions. For this, there was a call for a restructuring of the ocean economy value chain, the implementation of sustainable fisheries regulation, and a



common configuration of ocean governance. On this issue, H.E Edgard Razafindravahy, called for the urgency of a sustained EU - Africa dialogue in renewable energies for oceans and the harnessing of shared marine resources.

The panel concluded with a pledge for the mobilization of regional projects in the circular economy and the consideration of youth's potential to be actors of change in this transition.

- **Investing in Resilient Health Systems: At the Nexus of Pandemics, Conflict, and Climate**

The fourth panel focused on the development of health resilient systems and the intersection of health, climate, and security. It involved three speakers, **Dr. Jean Kaseya**, Director-General of the Centre of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, **Marta Temido**, Member of the European Parliament and former Portuguese Minister of Health, and **Dirk Brems**, Director-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The speakers of the panel emphasized the importance of a **long-view leadership in health**, focused on a strengthened relationship between Africa and Europe. Cooperation in health crisis prevention and management was expressed to be a key factor in achieving the growth and development goals of both continents.



The three professionals also underlined the necessity of re-establishing **mutual solidarity** and **trust** as a mechanism to leverage international cooperation for strengthening global health systems. In this regard, the speakers called for policy convergence and the implementation of climate-resilient health policies. Dr. Kaseya also highlighted the significance of investing in **local vaccine and medicine production** as a tool to enhance Africa's preparedness to crises. Domestic resource mobilization was also described as an

important factor for primary healthcare investment and for the implementation of international health coverage. As a final point, investment in capacity building for policymakers and health professionals, as well as the strengthening of training of health care workers was identified to be of critical significance.

- **Our Infrastructure of Tomorrow: Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence**

The fifth panel discussed the role of Artificial Intelligence and Technological advancement in fostering Europe and Africa's development, as well as its impact on various industries, such as agriculture and infrastructure development. **Dr. Seydina Moussa Ndiaye**, member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, and **Kate Kallot**, Founder and CEO of Amini were the main speakers.

As in previous conversations, the speakers emphasized the importance of strategic cooperation between the EU and Africa. The two professionals also highlighted the role of **academics and entrepreneurs** in fostering the **AI revolution** in Africa. Reflecting on policy and utilization, a gap was identified in terms of African governments' understanding of AI technicalities and its use by the population, indicating that policies and regulations are still not up to date to the current use that Africans make of AI. In order to ensure the empowerment of young people, and particularly of engineers in harnessing their skills and capabilities for AI development and application, a call was



made for **better governance coherence** and the alignment of policy with current AI trends and usages. Emphasizing the importance of data and today's landscape of **data scarcity** in the African continent, Kate Kallort underlined the importance of governments fostering local AI ecosystems that take into consideration the region's history, culture, and socio-economic particularities. Within that process, the collection of generation of various data was described as crucial.

The development of local technology and local AI frameworks is a key factor for Africa's future industrialisation, therefore, as expressed by Dr. Ndiaye, it is of utmost importance that governments support the youth in cultivating skills in **machine learning** and **automated systems**. Governments should also work in developing policy that can keep in pace with new uses of AI and other advanced technological systems in the continent.

- **Rethinking Global Partnerships: Moving from an Aid to Investment Mindset**

The last panel discussion focused on the creation of new partnership narratives between Africa and Europe, emphasizing the importance of a relationship grounded in mutual interests, beyond the bounds of traditional aid. The conversation was led by **Jean Van Wetter**, CEO of Enabel, **Langenbucher Anja**, Director of the Europe Office of the Gates Foundation, **Luc Bagur**, Director of the DG INTPA at the EU Commission, **Papa Amadou Sarr**, Executive director of Partnerships at the French Agency of Development, **Mouctar Bah**, President of the Africa Brussels Hub, and **Reinhold Elges**, Director of the GIZ Representation in Brussels.

During the conversation, the panelists underlined the importance of **empowering the private sector** as an engine of socio-economic development. Following on remarks made by previous panels, the speakers stressed out the insufficiency of Foreign Direct Investment and Official Development Assistance as a source of funding, indicating the need to implement new financial mechanisms to achieve Africa's development agenda. An emphasis was made on the importance of creativity and resilience in fostering the private and social sectors, as well as the key role of implementing a 360 approach to support **investment and human development**.

In order for the private sector to be used as a catalyst of socio-economic advancement, a call was made for de-risking the private sector through an improved **risk alleviation management process**. Such transition, as explained by the speakers, could only be made possible by leveraging **Africa's capabilities and resources**, and by removing conditionalities that hinder investors' confidence and flexibility in the sector.

