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MAKE THE EU-AFRICA AXIS COUNT ON A GLOBAL SCALE

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: TRANSLATING AMBITIONS INTO TANGIBLE OUTCOMES

Online

EDITORIAL

MAKE THE EU-AFRICA AXIS COUNT ON A GLOBAL SCALE

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: TRANSLATING AMBITIONS INTO TANGIBLE OUTCOMES

Editorial — Making the EU–Africa Axis a Tangible Reality

For too long, the relationship between Europe and Africa has oscillated between ambitious declarations and slow implementation. The intentions are there, the promises too. But the time for speeches is over – it is time for action.

The two continents are more interdependent than ever. Climate crises, geopolitical tensions, digital and energy transitions: the challenges are shared, as are the opportunities. Making the EU–Africa axis a pillar of the new global order now depends on one thing: delivering visible results.

On the ground, encouraging signs are emerging. Partnerships in green hydrogen, clean energy and infrastructure are taking shape. New digital and transport corridors are developing. Innovative financial instruments are being deployed to attract private investment. With the Global Gateway, Europe aims to prove that it can invest differently – sustainably, transparently, and in line with Africa's own priorities.

Yet, turning ambition into action remains difficult. Too many projects still get lost in administrative complexity, unstable frameworks, or slow financial procedures. The partnership will only gain credibility when it translates into concrete achievements: connected networks, supported local enterprises, and real jobs created.

The digital divide perfectly illustrates this challenge. Africa is moving fast with young entrepreneurs, fintech solutions, and mobile-based innovation, yet infrastructure and connectivity lag behind. Europe has a key role to play in supporting Africa's digital transformation by sharing its experience in regulation, cybersecurity, and data governance. But in doing so, Africa can also learn from Europe's own mistakes. Overregulation in the EU has sometimes hindered B2B innovation; Africa has the opportunity to adopt a more balanced approach – ensuring consumer protection without stifling digital entrepreneurship and businessdriven growth. Building a Euro–African digital space based on trust and sovereignty would send a strong signal of a genuine partnership between equals.

Energy is another key priority. While over 600 million Africans still live without access to electricity, the continent holds vast renewable potential – solar, wind, and hydropower. The challenge is to make this transition a driver of local development, not just a new export market. That means technology transfers, skills development, and integrating value chains within Africa. The continent's demographic strength – with 60% of its population under 25 – is an extraordinary asset. But this advantage will only materialise if massive investments are made in education, vocational training, and technical expertise.

Beyond specific sectors, success depends on one central factor: trust. For too long, cooperation has been viewed through the lens of aid. But Africa no longer seeks more assistance – it seeks an equal partnership based on shared responsibility. Europe, in turn, must see Africa as a strategic actor, essential to its own stability and prosperity.

The world is changing. Geopolitical balances are shifting. In this context, the Euro–African relationship can become a force for balance – a model of cooperation grounded in sustainability, solidarity, and innovation.

To make the EU–Africa axis truly count on a global scale means giving it weight where it matters most: on the ground, in projects, and in the lives of citizens. It means building real bridges – energy, digital, and human – between two continents that now share a common destiny.

The tools are there, and so is the will. What is needed now is implementation worthy of the ambition. The future of this partnership will no longer be measured by the strength of words, but by the reality of results.

Editor-in-Chief
LAURENT ULMANN

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AU-EU Partnership: 25 years delivering

H.E. **JAVIER NIÑO PÉREZ**

EU Ambassador to the AU

2025 is a symbolic year as we celebrate the 25th anniversary **of the AU-EU** unique and enduring partnership **(#AUEU25**) since the first Africa-Europe Summit that was held in Cairo on April 2000. We built the institutional and operational frameworks to implement a vision, based on a critical mass of common values, principles and interests we share. Working together in a spirit of equality, respect and cooperation. Our relations are deeper and more political significant, involving all organs of both Unions, aligned with the AU's Agenda 2063 and the EU's political priorities.

In the lead-up to the 7th AU-EU Summit **scheduled to 24-25 November in Luanda, Angola,** the new leadership of both AU and EU and around 80 governments at Ministerial level met on 21 May 2025, in Brussels. **They took stock of the** implementation of the Joint Vision for 2030 agreed by the African and European leaders at their last Summit in 2022, ensuring a strategic alignment around four central pillars: Prosperity, Peace and Security, People, and Planet - multilateralism. This is a fundamental platform to get tangible results for African and European citizens: a main objective of my own team at the EU Delegation to the African Union.

The EU stands by the desire shown by most of the African population to live in a democratic and fair society. We believe in this societal model. Besides, the EU is the largest partner of Africa in practically all fields and is, by far, Africa's largest trading and investment partner, accounting for about 33% of Africa's total trade. We invest in Africa many times more than other major actors together and we work, both at continental and national levels, across sectors. We are here to stay, for long term shared interests, not only for transactional short-time actions. We create solutions together with African partners.

As a main financing pillar, the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package mobilises investments to drive long-term prosperity, to foster regional economic integration, future-oriented infrastructure, and competitiveness of our economies. In concrete, it includes 138 flagships and Team Europe Initiatives that are delivering positive results and transformational impact.

The EU has also been an active and main partner for peace in the African continent, namely of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and Africa-owned security initiatives. In this endeavour, we substantially support African leadership, entities and countries via the EU Peace Facility. The majority of the EU civilian and military training and security missions are based in Africa, for example in Horn of Africa/ Somalia, Red Sea, Central Africa, Libya, Sahel/Gulf of Guinea and Mozambique. We believe long lasting peace and security comes with democratic principles, rule of law, economic opportunities, the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, good governance, gender equality and justice.

A major concern for both continents is migration and mobility, which can be a catalyst for economic, social and human development. EU-African partnership initiatives cover all aspects of migration by strengthening migration governance and management, fostering cooperation on return, readmission and sustainable reintegration, fighting migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings. A particular focus is on addressing the root causes of irregular migration - climate change, conflicts and lack of opportunities – and on enhancing existing legal pathways for migration and mobility.

We place human development at the heart of the AU-EU partnership, such as empowering youth and women through education, skills development, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Examples are the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme, the Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa, the AU-EU Youth Lab, the Youth Mobility for Africa, the Africa-Europe Youth Academy, under the Youth Action Plan in EU external relations, the expanded **Erasmus+ program,** cultural exchanges such as Maisha, **and** the AU-EU Innovation Agenda.

Finally, it is important to highlight the importance of multilateralism. No country, big or small, can meet today's challenges alone. As the geopolitical context evolves, the EU will continue to be a forward-looking defender of multilateralism, with the UN charter at the core. And we find in the AU a partner in this journey. We are a strong supporter of Africa's legitimate place and voice at the global arena, namely to become a full member of the G20.

As EU High Representative/Vice-President Kaja Kallas remarked on her statement for the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace in April: we need to learn from history that isolationism and unilateralism led to painful results and instability. We defend that respect and dialogue should prevail over war; rule of law over force. Our commitment to multilateralism is not just a matter of principle—it is a matter of global necessity.

The AU-EU Summit in November is a key moment to reaffirm our unwavering collaboration to keep delivering in light of the current and forthcoming challenges. To continue building future-proof and blissful societies in both continents. Our 25th anniversary is a silver hook to explain how the AU-EU Partnership matters to them. Be it as peace in one country contributes to regional stability, as investment in renewables allows them to have secure and cheaper energy, as strengthening democracy leads to freedom and fair distribution of resources, as it delivers education and work opportunities, access to quality medicine or to a health facility, and to economic growth brought by trade. During this year, we are going to give voice to different people, as we gave to Theresa and Roberta to explain how the Partnership puts Youth at its core and to a group of diverse participants at the ACS2 on why climate action should continue to be a priority of our working together with Africa.

More examples will come at our website, Facebook and X that can be followed with the **#AUEU25**.

Short bio

H.E. Ambassador **Javier Niño Pérez** has been serving as the Head of the EU Delegation to the African Union since January 2024. A Spanish national, he has held various positions within the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission, including Director/Deputy Managing Director Americas, Head of Division US and Canada, and Head of Division Turkey. He has served as the EU Ambassador / Head of Delegation in Haiti and Cuba and has held various positions within the Political and Economic Sections of European Commission Delegations in Trinidad & Tobago and Burkina Faso. He holds a Master of Arts in Advanced Political Studies from the College of Europe in Bruges, an LL.M. in European Law from the Free University of Brussels, and a degree in Law from the University of Valladolid. He is fluent in Spanish, English, and French.

Background information:

AU-EU Partnership celebrates 25 years: Two Unions, a joint vision

The African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) launched a year-long celebration marking the 25th anniversary **of their** unique and enduring partnership, **si**nce the first Africa-Europe Summit on 3-4 April 2000 in Cairo. Together, the EU and the AU represent and carry the voices, hopes and dreams of more than 1.9 billion people. Collaboration is rooted in shared values, common interests and a commitment to multilateralism. Both are driving sustainable and people-centred progress, implementing the Joint Vision for 2030 aligned with the Africa Agenda 2063 and the EU's political priorities. In the lead-up to the **7th AU-EU Summit scheduled to 24-25 November in Luanda, Angola,** the new leadership of both AU and EU and around 80 governments at Ministerial level met in Brussels on May 21st. Recall key moments over the 25 years of cooperation in this looking back exercise, and understand how youth policies and initiatives are key in the AU-EU partnership. More information will be shared along the year: follow with the **#AUEU25** on both Unions' digital platforms.

Global Gateway

The Global Gateway Africa – Europe Investment Package aims to support Africa for a strong, inclusive, green and digital transformation with EUR 150 billion worth of investments. The Global Gateway is a European investment strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors, and to strengthen health, education and research. Through Global Gateway, the EU is strengthening connections between Europe and partner countries. A joint report taking stock of progress in the implementation of the 6th EU-AU Summit commitments on sustainable prosperity is available here, a factsheet with Global Gateway flagship projects in Africa here and other concrete projects here. Follow here the Global Gateway Forum (October 9-10 2025).

More information:

European Union Delegation to the African Union website, Facebook and X

EEAS Press Material and YouTube channel

The **EIB**, a **key partner** of the **Global Gateway** in promoting **sustainable development** in **Africa**

INTERVIEW

AMBROISE **FAYOLLE**

EIB Vice-President

1. What role does the EIB play in Africa? And how does Africa fit into EIB Global's strategy?

In 2024, Africa received about 40% of our total investment beyond the European Union, making it the biggest beneficiary of this category of EIB financing – a total of €3.1 billion of new investment. Beyond the figures, our priority via EIB Global, our arm for development and international partnerships, is to finance high-impact projects promoting sustainable growth, employment and the quality of people's daily lives.

In October, our board approved new strategic orientations for EIB Global. It focuses on win-win global partnerships and a strong European voice in a changing geopolitical landscape. EIB Global will tailor approaches by region and sector, aligned with EU priorities. In sub-Saharan Africa, we will focus on key enabling infrastructure needed for development, such as health, water, energy (both on-grid and off-grid), sustainable agriculture, transport and digital inclusion, supporting the local private sector and building strong win-win partnerships and strategic alliances for impact, with new tools and streamlined procedures. Our objective is to make a difference on the ground.

As the EU bank, we finance and implement our activities in close cooperation with the European Commission and our partner multilateral and national development finance institutions. We have also invested in innovative and high-impact funds such as Pembani Remgro Infrastructure Fund II, Amethis III and I&P Afrique Entrepreneurs 3 to back young companies in African countries where it is difficult to access finance.

Our strong presence in Africa falls under the EU Global Gateway strategy, in which the EIB, as the financing arm of the European Union, remains a key component. With our Team Europe partners, we reached the €300 billion target for Global Gateway investments ahead of time, with one-third of the total amount mobilised by the EIB. All together, we have already committed to surpassing €400 billion by 2027.

2. Could you illustrate your action in Africa with some examples?

There were a number of new, impactful investments announced during the Global Gateway Forum, such as a €39 million loan to expand wind power in Cabo Verde, a project expected to reinforce the country's energy sovereignty and leadership in the green transition across West Africa, and a €95 million financing package for BioNTech to develop a local vaccine manufacturing facility in Rwanda. Another key project with the EIB as lead financier (providing a €125 million loan) is the regional corridor in Mauritania and the extension of a 225 kV high-voltage line over 600 km to connect rural communities and link solar power plants to the grid. The project is expected to significantly improve electricity access in underserved rural areas and enhance the reliability and security of the national grid with the integration of renewable energy sources. More recently, on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund, we joined with Vista Group to announce the signature of two financing agreements of €20 million to Vista Gui and €10 million to Vista Bank (SL) to strengthen access to finance for small and medium companies and mid-caps in Guinea and Sierra Leone. By opening access to long-term capital for youth- and women-led businesses in agriculture, this partnership marks a step towards inclusive finance in West Africa.

3. The EIB is known as the climate bank. What do you expect from COP30 in Belém?

At COP30, we need to deliver a message that we are keeping the green transition on track with a strong sense of partnership around

Strong EIB support to Côte d'Ivoire's initiative to reforest almost 20% of the country by 2030 the world. And the EIB will have a key role as a proud member of the group of multilateral development banks.

Through the second phase of our Climate Bank Roadmap – unanimously approved by our board in September 2025 – we are staying the course on climate action and remain committed to working closely with our fellow multilateral development banks. A key priority is to support countries and businesses, including in Africa, in accelerating the energy transition and climate adaptation, but also other Sustainable Development Goals such as the digital transition.

The EIB Group remains committed to dedicating over 50% of its finance to climate and environmental objectives – supporting at least €1 trillion in green investment this decade. We finance concrete projects around the world that are all aligned with the Paris Agreement. We do it because we think it is good to fight against climate change, but also because we are convinced it is a key element for the competitiveness of our economies. This is a key priority for us as we embark upon implementing the second phase of our Climate Bank Roadmap 2026-2030, which consolidates the role of European Investment Bank Group as the climate bank.

It is remarkable that, at COP29 in Baku, multilateral development banks issued a joint statement outlining financial support and other measures for countries to achieve ambitious climate outcomes. And here we have some good news to share. Last September, the multilateral development banks announced a significant milestone: their global climate finance rose by 10% last year, reaching a record $137 billion. Even more notably, climate finance directed toward low- and middle-income economies increased by 14%, surpassing $85 billion. These figures demonstrate that multilateral development banks are firmly on track to meet their ambitious climate goals.

The EIB, key investor in the Sustainable Cacao Initiative, granting €100 million in intermediated loans over past three years

4. And how does the EIB's action address climate challenges in Africa? Can you accelerate sustainable investment in Africa?

In Africa, we see how much the cost and impact of extreme weather events and disasters is rising. This is why accelerating investment in prevention and adaptation is so important: every euro we invest in these two areas saves five to seven euros in damage repair, reconstruction and losses. In the second phase of our Climate Bank Roadmap, we have decided to double our financing for adaptation to climate change to €30 billion by 2030, focusing on high priority sectors such as agriculture, water, cities and vulnerable regions and communities. We will also focus our action on clean energy transition as a shared business opportunity to support sustainable growth and security.

We are supporting many impactful projects to address climate change and preserve environment in Africa, such as Côte d'Ivoire's initiative to reforest almost 20% of the country by 2030, the clean-up operation in Benin to tackle the management of solid waste under the Clean Oceans initiative, and an innovative project with the BURN company in East Africa, which is expected to avoid 12 million tonnes of carbon emissions over five years. We improved off-grid access to energy in Benin and power grids in Cabo Verde, as well as the connection of schools and hospitals to solar energy in The Gambia. We also are a key investor in the Sustainable Cacao Initiative, granting €100 million in intermediated loans over past three years to certified sustainable cocoa cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire. And we plan to triple this amount in the next three years, while expanding such operations to other countries across the region. These financial partnerships are complemented by technical assistance programmes aimed at strengthening the capacities of small and medium companies and cooperatives in the cocoa sector – particularly those led by women entrepreneurs – to develop viable business plans and meet future environmental and social requirements for products exported to EU Member States.

To help bridge the gap between climate goals and private investment, the EIB will continue providing technical assistance to central banks, supervisors and financial institutions in developing and emerging economies through the Greening Financial Systems programme. For example, with EIB support, the Central Bank of Kenya developed the country's first Green Finance Taxonomy and Climate Risk Disclosure Framework, helping to inform and ultimately increase climate-related investments. The programme has since expanded to other countries around the globe, including in Africa with Rwanda, and new engagements in the West African Monetary Union, Egypt, Uganda and Morocco.

Social inequality is another pressing challenge in Africa. It is important to develop more inclusive climate finance and take better advantage of the power of diversity and women's leadership to accelerate climate action. That is why we have recently committed to the new Women for Stronger Communities and Growth initiative to strengthen resilience to climate change and improve food security, as well as offering new opportunities for jobs and growth. We also invested €74.8 million in the Mirova Gigaton Fund, which qualified for the 2X Challenge, to generate and provide clean energy in emerging markets while improving the access of women and low-income households to energy by investing in solar home systems and off-grid and mini-grid systems. The impact of our action will definitely make a difference on the ground.

STEFANO **SANNINO**

Director-General DG MENA, European Commission

The **Pact** for the **Mediterranean**: A **renewed partnership** for a **Common Mediterranean Space**

From the beginning of civilisation, the Mediterranean has been more than just a sea between continents: It has been a cradle of culture, trade, and exchange. The ties we share are centuries old, rooted in history and enriched by the diversity of our peoples. These bonds remind us that our future is also shared, and that cooperation is part of our DNA.

In a world of profound geo-strategic and economic uncertainties, closer cooperation amongst partners is not just a choice, it is the way forward. And it is in this mindset that we are bringing Euro-Mediterranean cooperation to a new level. We are creating a *Common Mediterranean Space*.

In October, the European Commission adopted the new Pact for the Mediterranean. The timing could not be better. In November, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration which inaugurated the cooperation framework between the European Union, North Africa, and the Middle East.

The Pact for the Mediterranean

We are strengthening our partnership through the Pact for the Mediterranean. We have designed it reflecting our common aspirations in a spirit of joint ownership and co-creation. Our ambition is clear. We are paving the way towards a greater integration of the common Mediterranean space..

The new Pact is a partnership of equals. And we will implement it through a joint Action Plan which we are going to start rolling out in the first half of 2026. The Pact has been shaped through broad and inclusive consultations in the first place with partners from across the Southern Neighbourhood and the EU. Many excellent ideas have been put forward, and we will build on them to ensure the Pact responds to the real needs and interests of all.

People, prosperity, security

Our approach with the Pact for the Mediterranean combines a political vision – the integration of the Euro-Mediterranean space – with a pragmatic approach. One with transformative initiatives in key areas with a positive impact for citizens and our societies.

The Pact is a process structured around three pillars.

Firstly, we are putting people at the centre.

It is people who drive change, foster exchange, and spark innovation. We want to empower the Mediterranean youth by investing in higher education, vocational training, and jobs. Let us not forget that many of them in the Southern Neighbourhood are not in education, employment, or training. And we seek to promote a common space for cultural exchange and sports.

Secondly, we want to unlock the full potential of our economies.

Changing global trade patterns bring new opportunities for the diversification of supply and production chains. And we can also boost intra-regional economic integration in the Southern Mediterranean. Our aim is to ensure that investment opportunities are matched with appropriate financing, especially from the private sector. We will build on the Global Gateway initiative.

Let me mention the Trans-Mediterranean Energy and Clean Tech Cooperation Initiative (T-MED) as a prominent example. We can achieve faster decarbonisation, increase our energy production and supply, and ultimately the competitiveness of all our countries.

Apart from strengthening the Blue Economy, we want to improve digital connectivity and decarbonised transport throughout the region. We want to boost sustainable economic development and create the quality jobs needed for young people.

The third dimension of the New Pact is strengthening our cooperation on security, resilience, and migration management.

We want to reinforce our joint capacity and preparedness to react to natural and human disasters, including through a new European Firefighting Hub based in Cyprus. And the effective management of migration in a safe and orderly manner is important. This requires a whole-of-route approach including the prevention of illegal border crossings, the fight against migrants smuggling and the trafficking in human beings, and close collaboration on integrated border management.

Neighbours of our neighbours

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership needs friends and allies. The reformed Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) will be an important partner - with its unique convening power and inclusive membership.

We must also look beyond the Mediterranean. Cooperation with the neighbours of our neighbours is crucial. The Gulf countries bring considerable political and financial clout, as well as a strong interest in stability, connectivity, and investment. We have just witnessed their constructive engagement in humanitarian, development, and peace issues during the United Nations 80th General Assembly. Their engagement can help us address shared challenges — from energy transition and climate resilience to economic diversification and youth employment.

The Pact also includes elements that are relevant for the wider African continent. Major initiatives, such as T-MED, legal migration projects, climate resilience and green transition, skills exchanges, digital connectivity transportation projects and trade facilitation, have the potential for broader continental impact.

Embarking on a Common Mediterranean Space

2025 marks a new milestone in the reinvigoration of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Together, we can make the new Pact a powerful instrument of prosperity, peace, and stability.

ROBERTO VIOLA
Director General - DG CONNECT

Building Trust in the **EU-Africa Digital Space: Data Governance, Privacy, Cybersecurity, and Sovereignty**

This year, the African Union (AU) and the EU celebrate the 25th anniversary of their special and fruitful partnership highlighting digital as key area of cooperation.

Across the African continent, we have seen a dynamic and rapidly evolving technology ecosystem take shape over the past years. Furthermore, Africa's demographic outlook reinforces the continent's potential in digital: Sub-Saharan Africa is home to the world's youngest population, with approximately 70 percent under the age of 30, and the continent's working-age population is projected to double by 2050. This rapid growth, combined with high rates of urbanisation and one of the fastest increases in mobile Internet adoption globally, positions Africa as a critical frontier for digital innovation and economic expansion.

Yet, realising this potential requires the right technological solutions, an enabling funding landscape, human capital, and strong political will to truly unlock inclusive growth. This is why we are seeing many African countries prioritising digital talent development as a strategic objective. By connecting Europe's digital ecosystem with Africa's, both regions could benefit from structured mobility pathways that align digital labour market demands with available skills.

Within this context, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has underscored that partnerships with Africa are a geopolitical priority for this Commission. Her visit to South Africa earlier this year and the upcoming EU–AU Summit in Angola are strong signals of this commitment, with digital transformation constituting a central pillar of this agenda. The EU seeks not only to foster mutual learning, but also to explore how EU-Africa collaboration can be deepened to expand the benefits of digital innovation for citizens and businesses on both continents.

Central to this vision is the principle of *trust*. *Trust* has become the defining factor in today's digital age. Without it, connectivity, innovation, and digital growth remain fragile. This is why the Executive Vice-President Henna Virkkunen together with Kaja Kallas, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, have launched an International Digital Strategy to reinforce global standards, strengthen security, and shape a trusted framework for digital governance.

At the core of this strategy stands the new integrated EU Tech Business Offer, which will support the deployment of secure and trusted digital connectivity, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), Artificial Intelligence (AI) software solutions, and beyond. Building on the foundation laid by the Global Gateway Strategy, the Offer underlines the strategic relevance of the digital sector. The ultimate objective is to create a package of mutual benefits, by tailoring and combining technology components in a modular approach, and by addressing the interests of both the partner countries and the EU.

In the EU, we have put trust at the heart of our digital transformation, embedding it within a human-centred ecosystem guided by European values. This ecosystem is underpinned by secure and accountable practices, supported by trusted vendors, and designed to safeguard fundamental rights while ensuring resilience.

For example, with the current EU ID Wallet integration, Member States have the obligation to establish, maintain and publish trusted lists of qualified trust service providers and the service provided by them. Users, whether citizens, businesses or public administrations, benefit from the legal effect associated with a given qualified trust service.

Furthermore, with the EU's policies on secure 5G, we have evaluated that the security of 5G networks and other digital infrastructure is essential to ensure *trust* and willingness of users to the networks for their activities. The EU can assist partner countries who are equally concerned about the need to build their digital economy on secure and sovereign foundations.

At the same time as we are building trust, we are also having to keep up with a drastically evolving European tech landscape,with new emerging high-end, trusted solutions. As highlighted in our Competitiveness Compass, the EU's priority is to become the place where future technologies, services and clean products are invented, manufactured and put on the market. With this Compass, European private sector companies are equipped to invest and build secure and trusted digital infrastructure abroad.

This brings us back to the EU Tech Business Offer, which will help us in this objective: together with these firms, we build a strong Tech Team Europe approach with Member States, aligning financing with political support and bridging the gap to partner countries' digital ecosystems. Our job is to support them to open doors, de-risk investments, and make sure their solutions can be tailored and bring the best value to our partner countries.

By prioritising people, Europe distinguishes itself as a long-standing and reliable partner in global digital cooperation. Moreover, Europe promotes financing and investment models that are not only sustainable but also credible, thereby creating a solid foundation for equitable collaboration with Africa.

By advancing the EU–Africa Digital Space together, Europe and Africa will not only share the benefits of digitalisation but also shape a future for both partners where sovereignty, innovation, and trust go hand in hand, ultimately building a long-lasting partnership. It is now up to Europe to demonstrate to our African counterparts the EU's added value, through a new, trusted approach to the continent. *(849 words)*

LACINA KONÉ
CEO, Smart Africa Alliance

Smart Africa's Strategic Role in the EU–Africa Alliance: Building an Interconnected Mediterranean Digital Space

The partnership between the European Union and Africa has always carried a dual promise: shared prosperity and shared responsibility. Yet, if we are to "make the EU–Africa axis count on a global scale," we must move beyond declarations of intent and invest in the infrastructure, governance, and trust that bind digital economies together. In this endeavor, Smart Africa stands at the heart of the transformation, bridging ambition and action, particularly through the development of an interconnected Mediterranean digital space.

From Shared Vision to Shared Infrastructure

Africa's digital revolution is no longer a distant aspiration; it is a daily reality. Mobile penetration, fintech innovations, and e-commerce platforms have changed the lives of millions, but they also expose a paradox: while Africa leads in leapfrogging technologies, the continent still struggles with fragmentation and uneven access.

Europe, with its mature regulatory frameworks, technological expertise, and deep capital pools, is uniquely positioned to complement Africa's momentum. Conversely, Africa offers Europe a partner of demographic dynamism, resource abundance, and fast-growing markets. The Mediterranean, historically a space of exchange and interdependence, can once again become the corridor of shared digital futures.

The ambition is clear: develop a digitally interconnected Euro-Mediterranean space that ensures secure data flows, interoperable infrastructures, and harmonized governance. The challenge, however, is to transform ambition into action.

Smart Africa as a Continental Lever

Smart Africa, a pan-African initiative endorsed by 40 African countries, the African Union Commission, and more than 60 private-sector partners, was created to accelerate Africa's digital transformation. Our role in the EU–Africa alliance is to provide the continental mechanisms that ensure that bilateral and regional projects scale to continental level.

For example, the Smart Africa Trust Alliance (SATA) advances cross-border digital trust and data governance across Africa, offering a ready bridge to align with Europe's GDPR framework. Similarly, Africa's Digital Identity Blueprint, led by Smart Africa, is designed to ensure that every African can be securely identified in the digital economy, while remaining interoperable with global systems.

When Europe seeks reliable, trusted partners for a common digital market, Smart Africa ensures that Africa speaks with one voice-anchored in sovereignty, but open to cooperation.

The Interconnected Mediterranean Digital Space

The Mediterranean has always been a frontier of opportunity, but today it is also a frontier of digital divides. North Africa's advanced infrastructure stands in stark contrast to the connectivity gaps of Sub-Saharan Africa. To bridge this divide, three pillars are essential:

1. Connectivity as a Public Good

Joint EU–Africa investments in submarine cables, terrestrial fiber backbones, and satellite infrastructure are critical. Initiatives like Smart Africa's Bulk Capacity Purchase Marketplace, designed to aggregate demand and lower prices for African countries, can be strategically aligned with Team Europe to ensure affordable and sustainable access across the Mediterranean rim.

2. Data and Digital Sovereignty

Trust is the new currency of the digital economy. Europe's leadership in data protection and Africa's drive for digital sovereignty can converge into a Mediterranean data corridor governed by mutual standards on privacy, security, and cross-border data flows. Smart Africa's frameworks already pave the way for this alignment.

3. Innovation and Skills Mobility

Beyond infrastructure, the EU–Africa axis must empower youth and innovators. Joint programs in AI capacity-building, cloud services, and startup incubation can create a circular ecosystem of innovation. Africa's youthful population, projected to represent 42% of the global youth by 2030 can become Europe's closest partner in addressing talent shortages, while Europe can accelerate Africa's integration into global value chains

A Global Lever in a Fragmented World

In an era where digital geopolitics is increasingly polarized, the EU–Africa axis can be more than a bilateral partnership, it can become a global lever of balance. Together, we can advocate for a digital order that is inclusive, transparent, and respectful of sovereignty.

By embedding Africa's digital strategies into Europe's Global Gateway, and by integrating European standards into Africa's continental blueprints, the two continents can together set benchmarks that others will follow. This is not just about development cooperation; it is about shaping the future architecture of the global digital economy.

Conclusion: From Aspirations to Tangible Outcomes

The narrative of Europe–Africa cooperation must evolve. No longer should it be framed solely as aid or assistance, but as co-creation and a partnership of equals.

Smart Africa's mission is to ensure that Africa is not a passive recipient of digital globalization but an active architect. By creating an interconnected Mediterranean digital space, we will not only bridge divides but also create a new axis of influence, one that makes Europe and Africa indispensable partners in shaping the digital century.

The EU–Africa axis can count globally only if it counts first for our citizens, through affordable connectivity, trusted digital services, and opportunities for innovation. At Smart Africa, we are ready to ensure that the bridge between Europe and Africa is not just envisioned but built, strong, and lasting.

The Digital Pillar of the EU's Nearshoring Strategy to Africa

An Interview with

EMMANUEL LEMPERT

Vice-President, Head of Government Affairs for the Middle East, Africa, and France at SAP

By Laurent Ulmann, Editorial Director of The European Files

Laurent Ulmann: Europe's geopolitical imperative to secure its supply chains has intensified focus on Africa, notably through the European Union's Global Gateway strategy. How do you assess the current stakes and SAP's strategic role in connecting the EU and African economies?

Emmanuel Lempert: Thank you. The stakes are profoundly strategic, moving beyond mere trade to establish shared resilience. What we are witnessing is the translation of political intent into measurable economic integration. The EU has committed €150 billion to the Africa-Europe Investment Package—a significant portion of the *Global Gateway* mobilization. This level of commitment underscores the EU's recognition that its economic future is intrinsically linked to Africa's stability and growth.

Economic interdependence is already evident. Europe is Africa's first trade partner and Africa is critical to Europe's twin transition, providing essential critical raw materials needed for European green and digital industries.

However, investments alone don't guarantee resilience. The challenge is execution: how do we convert these strategic investments into tangible, digitally optimized supply chains? This is where SAP comes in. Our strategic role is to provide the digital backbone that ensures secure, transparent, and high-performing connections. Without these links, there is a risk of funding siloed infrastructure projects. SAP can be viewed as a digital enabler for the *Global Gateway*.

Laurent Ulmann: Let's focus on execution and tangible projects. *Global Gateway* involves complex corridor projects, such as the 1,800-kilometer Lobito Corridor. How can SAP contribute to make sure that physical infrastructure investments translate into real operational efficiencies?

Emmanuel Lempert: This is the nexus of physical infrastructure and digital intelligence. The core value we provide through our solutions is transforming friction-prone trade routes into standardized, predictable supply chains.

The issue is friction. African logistics are hampered by structural inefficiencies that severely impact competitiveness. The World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI) highlights these weaknesses. Without closing this digital gap, the geographical advantage of nearshoring is eroded by operational risk.

SAP solutions standardize documentation and provide real-time tracking, directly addressing low LPI scores. By digitizing customs and intermodal transfers along strategic corridors—like the Lobito rail line—we can significantly enhance the line's efficiency. This directly supports the *Global Gateway* objective of facilitating and reducing the time and cost of goods in transit.

Furthermore, digital standardization is vital for investment diversification. Current Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa is hyper-concentrated. By implementing standardized digital platforms, we can establish the governance, visibility, and control necessary to de-risk investment in new geographies.

Laurent Ulmann: The success of these corridors depends on cross-border regulatory harmonization among several African states. How can SAP's digital backbone facilitate collaboration between customs and regional agencies to digitize and unify administrative processes, preventing logistics gains from being canceled by border bureaucracy?

Emmanuel Lempert: That is fundamental. We don't deliver just logistics tools; we deliver regional trade facilitation engines. Our technology acts as a de facto standard for documentation. By providing a single, unalterable platform (thanks to the blockchain layer), we can enable every national custom or tax authority to access the same certified data instantly. This makes border inspections faster, more transparent, and reduces the need for redundant paperwork, directly supporting the ambitious goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Laurent Ulmann: Supply chain risk now includes ethical and environmental compliance. How do you secure the supply of billions of euros worth of critical raw materials and navigate complex EU environmental regulations? How do you embed ethics and circularity directly into IT systems?

Emmanuel Lempert: We view strict EU regulations not as obstacles, but as critical drivers of competitive advantage for African partners. Today, security means verifiable sustainability.

Regarding critical raw materials, the need for auditable proof of origin is non-negotiable. Our blockchain-enabled solutions capture and store material genealogy data. This creates an immutable digital ledger that provides the technical evidence required for due diligence compliance, mitigating ethical and legal risks associated with critical raw materials flow.

The same principle applies to the circular economy. EU Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations are financially punitive if ignored. Our Cloud and AI solutions allow manufacturers to embed circularity principles from the design phase, providing the granular visibility needed to optimize product design and reduce exposure to measurable EPR costs. Furthermore, decarbonization is a key EU expectation. Our AI-powered predictive analytics solutions don't just track materials; they allow us to model and quantify the carbon footprint of every step of manufacturing and transport. By integrating Environmental Key Performance Indicators (E-KPIs) into our ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) systems, we empower businesses to optimize routes and production modes to reduce emissions. This is the level of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) transparency that investors and regulators demand today.

Laurent Ulmann: The adoption of world-class digital platforms can be costly for African SMEs, which are the local economy's backbone. How does SAP ensure its platforms are financially accessible and scalable for local SMEs involved in the supply chain, ensuring that this growth is truly inclusive?

Emmanuel Lempert: Inclusion must be technological. The answer lies in Cloud and AI services and modularity. We operate on subscription-based licensing models that significantly reduce the need for heavy initial Capital Expenditure (CAPEX). This allows SMEs to pay only for the capacity and services they actively consume, shifting costs to manageable Operating Expenditure (OPEX). In addition, we have solutions specifically designed for SMEs. Crucially, we work with our local partner ecosystem to create pre-configured, sector-specific packages, enabling quick and low-cost integration into the digital networks of their larger European clients.

Laurent Ulmann: Deploying centralized digital systems along strategic corridors creates a dependency and a potential target. How do you ensure the cyber resilience of these platforms against threats targeting supply chain disruption? And critically: how is the data sovereignty of African nations guaranteed?

Emmanuel Lempert: Trust is the bedrock of our strategy; if digital is the pillar, security is the foundation. Our Cloud platforms and AI solutions are built to operate on global security standards, incorporating data redundancy and segmentation. Our solutions are themselves a de-risking mechanism by standardizing communications and limiting traditional vulnerabilities.

Regarding data sovereignty, we are highly sensitive to local laws. For Africa, this translates into developing our Cloud services through local or regional data centers where feasible and using technical architectures that ensure critical operational data is stored and managed in full compliance with the partner country's regulatory requirements. This is a prerequisite for building a durable, mutual trust partnership.

Laurent Ulmann: Finally, let's address human capital. How does SAP tackle the skills gap, and how does this support inclusive growth?

Emmanuel Lempert: Human capital is the foundation of our inclusive growth strategy. Technology is inert without the local expertise to deploy, maintain, and innovate from it. For example, we directly address this through our SAP Young Professionals Program. This initiative has already trained and certified hundreds of young talents as SAP Associate Consultants across African countries.

These intensive programs inject certified expertise directly into the local market. This provides the necessary assurance to European companies that a skilled workforce is available on the ground when they seek to decentralize production. Our certified consultants accelerate tech adoption and reduce the reliance on expensive expatriate expertise, supporting the shift from raw resource extraction toward sophisticated manufacturing.

Laurent Ulmann: Looking toward 2030, what is the most critical action policymakers and businesses should undertake to maximize the success of this nearshoring strategy?

Emmanuel Lempert: The crucial step is to mandate digital standards as a condition for investments. Policymakers must move beyond merely funding physical infrastructure and focus on harmonization within the corridors. This ensures every project not only delivers a physical asset but also contributes to the clean, standardized data needed for risk mitigation and performance measurement.

By making European technology standards and local talent the norm, we will ensure the nearshoring movement is resilient, verifiable, and mutually prosperous for the EU and Africa.

UDO **BULLMANN**

Member of the European Parliament for the Social Democrats, Chair of the Delegation for Relations with the Republic of South Africa, coordinator of the Committees on Development and a member of the Committee on International Trade. His main focus areas are global politics and the North-South relations.

Towards a **green** and fair **EU** - S**outh Africa partnership**: **cooperating** for a just **energy transition**-

In recent years, the global political landscape has undergone profound shifts. Since the start of Trump's second term, the post-World War II world order, built on pillars of multilateralism and cooperative diplomacy, has become increasingly fragile. In this context, the need for robust, strategic partnerships between like-minded regions and nations has never been more urgent. Especially the relationship between the European Union and South Africa - a democratic country with similar values and goals on climate action, social justice and economic fairness - stands out.

A New Era in Global Cooperation

South Africa, as Africa's most industrialized economy and key player on the continent, represents an indispensable partner. Both the EU and South Africa aspire a mutually beneficial relationship based on the principles of sustainable development, environmental responsibility and an economy where no one should be left behind.

Achieving these goals demands more than a high-flying rhetoric. It requires pragmatic cooperation grounded in respect for local contexts and a genuine commitment to win-win partnerships. This means listening attentively to the needs of communities on the ground, empowering local stakeholders, and strengthening regional value chains and job creation. The green transition of the energy sector bares great potential not only for more environmental protection, but also to create inclusive opportunities for workers and businesses.

The Just Energy Transition Partnership: A Flagship Initiative

One of the most tangible examples of EU - South Africa collaboration is the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), an ambitious framework designed to support South Africa's transition from a coal-dependent economy to a sustainable, low-carbon future. This partnership is symbolic of how international cooperation can combine transformative change and social justice - if implemented correctly. To be successful, this energy transition initiative requires not just investments in clean technologies but also a skilled workforce capable of driving and sustaining these innovations.

Multi-Donor Support for Capacity Building

To this end, South Africa has launched the Just Energy Transition Skills Desk - a critical institutional mechanism under the JET Investment Plan. This Skills Desk aims to develop the human capital needed for the country's green economy shift, ensuring workers are equipped with the qualifications and expertise to thrive in new sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, and green hydrogen.

The Skills Desk is supported by a several donors, bringing together South Africa, the European Union, Germany, and Switzerland.

This multi-national backing provides essential financial resources, while also fostering knowledge exchange and policy alignment, creating a framework that can respond dynamically to challenges and opportunities.

This coordinated approach ensures that investment in South Africa's Just Energy Transition is not just a series of isolated projects but part of a coherent, long-term strategy that integrates economic development with environmental protection and social equity. By creating a robust labour and skills ecosystem, the partnership can help build resilience and adaptability for South Africa's workforce.

Green Hydrogen: Promise and Responsibility

The EU's engagement in South Africa's green transition also extends to cutting-edge sectors such as green hydrogen. Emerging as a key pillar of the future energy landscape, green hydrogen promises to decarbonize heavy industry and transport sectors while creating new avenues for economic growth.

Through JETP and related mechanisms, the EU will invest in green hydrogen projects in South Africa. However, these investments must be carefully managed to ensure that a broad segment of the population can benefit from the transition. The social dimension of energy projects is critical: local communities must be actively involved in the planning and implementation, ensuring that new jobs and business opportunities are accessible and that environmental impacts are responsibly managed. Inclusive participation is not just a moral imperative but a practical necessity. Projects that engage local populations tend to achieve greater acceptance and sustainability, helping avoid social conflicts and fostering a sense of ownership. Moreover, integrating local value chains strengthens regional economies, amplifying the positive impacts of foreign investment.

Embracing a shared vision of win-win cooperation

The EU and South Africa's partnership reflects a shared vision of cooperation that goes beyond transactional relationships. It embodies a philosophy of mutual respect and shared prosperity. The goal is to create a partnership where the transition to a green economy is not a zero-sum game but a win-win opportunity for both.

For the EU, supporting South Africa's Just Energy Transition aligns with broader strategic objectives - indispensable in times of global political instability: advancing climate goals under the European Green Deal, promoting sustainable development, and strengthening global alliances rooted in democratic values.

For South Africa, the partnership offers access to capital, expertise, and innovative technologies critical for diversifying its economy and reducing its carbon footprint.

The success of this cooperation is based on continuous dialogue and adaptability. With the global development of the energy landscape, also the frameworks and policies that govern international partnerships must evolve. Both the EU and South Africa recognize the need to remain flexible and responsive to changing circumstances, ensuring that the energy transition is both green and fair.

DITTE JUUL JØRGENSEN

Director General for Energy, European Commission

Energy transition for security, affordability and fighting climate change

Overall thematic frame for that specific edition: «Bridging the Divide: Translating Ambitions into Tangible Outcomes: Make the EU-Africa axis count on a global scale.".

Topic for DJJ: Renewable Energy and Green Technologies for Sustainable Development: Driving EU-Africa Cooperation

Energy transition for security, affordability and fighting climate change

The global transition to clean energy has never been more urgent: for our security, our economies, and our planet. With the severe impacts of climate change being felt across the world, countries are reinforcing their resilience, forging new alliances, and seeking new solutions for clean and efficient energy. The Global Stocktaking Outcome of COP28 reflects this urgency, emphasizing the need to triple renewable energy capacity, double energy efficiency worldwide, and to transition away from fossil fuels. In this context, the partnership between Europe and Africa is vital: not only for safeguarding the environment, but also for the economic and social stability of both our continents.

Energy access

Today, nearly 600 million people in Africa lack access to reliable electricity and close to 1 billion lack access to clean cooking (four out of every five people). This lack of access holds back African families on many fronts. As well as bringing major health and environmental consequences, it restricts education, entrepreneurship, and gender equity. It also hinders businesses from adopting modern and efficient tools that could increase productivity and economic prosperity.

Many of those without access are in rural areas, where grid extensions are financially and logistically very difficult to put in place. In these regions, decentralized renewable energy systems, such as mini-grids and solar home systems, can deliver power to remote communities otherwise isolated from national grids. Not only are these systems adaptable

and scalable, but they also offer resilience against climate disruptions, providing consistent energy supply where central grids cannot reach.

Investing in Africa's potential

Yet, if we can crack these challenges, we will unleash major opportunities. Africa is endowed with abundant renewable resources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power. It can gain substantially from the transition to a greener economy. However, the continent attracts only 3% of global energy investment. Potential investors face challenges including high capital costs, regulatory uncertainties, geographic barriers, and supply chain constraints. To be on track to meet its energy access and climate goals, Africa would need to quadruple its renewable capacity by the end of the decade, up from around 70 GW of renewable capacity[1]. It is estimated that USD 110 billion of renewable energy investment is needed annually through 2030 to meet these goals and to build renewable energy ecosystems across the continent. This is where EU-Africa cooperation can act as a leveraging force.

EU offers

With the Global Gateway initiative, the EU has put in place a new strategy for international cooperation. We are boosting smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors, as well as strengthening health, education and research systems across the world. Through its EUR 150 billion Africa-Europe Investment package, the EU seeks to bolster sustainable development in infrastructure, innovation, and inclusive growth. For instance, the Team Europe 'Africa-Europe Green Energy Initiative' aims to support the deployment of at least 50 GW of new renewable electricity generation capacity and to provide at least 100 million people in Africa with access to electricity, by 2030. This means increasing investment in energy systems that not only provide power to underserved communities but also enhance resilience against climate disruptions.

The European Green Deal and the Clean Industrial Deal are the EU's framework for green innovation and industrial transformation. Both contain important international relations strands which converge with Africa's rich potential. By merging European technological expertise with Africa's abundant resources in renewable energy, critical raw materials, and a young, educated workforce, our partnership offers unprecedented opportunities for bilateral cooperation and investments in local value chains and jobs.

Alongside these flagship strategies, we are taking on additional initiatives to expand renewable energy and address energy poverty across Africa. For example, the "Scaling Up Renewables in Africa" campaign, launched jointly by the European Commission and South Africa, targets fast-tracking energy access. This campaign works in line with the "Mission 300" initiative by the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank to expand renewable energy production throughout Africa.

Under this campaign, on 27 September 2025, the European Commission announced a EUR 545 million package. In a Team Europe approach, it will be implemented by the EU and its Member States as well as European Financial Institutions to boost electricity access, modernize power grids, and promote sustainable development and climate goals. The funding will support various projects, including a high-voltage line in Côte d'Ivoire, rural electrification in Cameroon and Somalia, and rural mini-grids in Madagascar.

A just transition to future opportunities

For African countries that rely on fossil fuels for energy supply and economic stability, the transition to clean energy poses a significant challenge. Still, there are pathways to gradually shift towards a more balanced and sustainable energy portfolio. Creating incentives to invest in renewables would be a strategic starting point. This could include subsidies for renewable energy projects, tax breaks for green technology innovations, and establishing tariffs that favour cleaner energy sources and therefore attract specialised industry.

Just Energy Transition Partnerships such as the ones established with South Africa and Senegal are designed to deliver climate finance that support developing countries to accelerate the transition to an equitable and socially inclusive low-carbon economy. Capacity building continues to be a central pillar of this cooperation, ensuring that knowledge transfer and skills development programs empower local communities and stakeholders to take charge of their own energy futures. Further, collaborations with European companies and research institutions can stimulate local entrepreneurship and innovation in the green technology sector.

For example, innovations in solar technology, including floating solar panels on bodies of water, offer solutions to land scarcity, especially in highly urbanized regions, while generating clean energy. Wind energy, particularly in regions such as the Horn of Africa and the Saharan desert, and small-scale hydropower projects can also play critical roles in diversifying the continent's energy mix.

Outlook

The global transition to clean energy has never been more urgent. But it has also never been more laden with opportunities. By embracing renewable energy and clean technologies, we can transform Africa into a clean energy powerhouse. This will bring global benefits by lowering emissions, while also bringing mutual benefits on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. We can deliver energy security and economic stability. We can drive inclusive growth, embracing social equity and climate resilience. Ultimately, the journey towards a sustainable energy future for Africa and Europe is not simply about energy transition – it is about socio-economic transformation. It is a journey that we must take, and a transformation that we can achieve, together.

1 IEA Announced Pledges Scenario

H.E. **OSAMA MOBAREZ**

Secretary General,
East Mediterranean Gas Forum

The **Eastern Mediterranean Corridor**: **Building Bridges** for Inclusive **Energy Cooperation**

The Mediterranean: Crossroads of Civilization, , Engine of Energy

The Mediterranean has always been **a civilizational crossroads**, the stage where cultures were born, flourished, and intertwined through centuries of commerce, diplomacy, and exchange. Today, this ancient basin has acquired a new dimension: energy. Natural gas and emerging low-carbon technologies are reshaping it into a strategic axis of global energy interconnectivity.

The Eastern Mediterranean: Prospects and Challenges

At the heart of this transformation lies **the Eastern Mediterranean**. Over the past few years, several countries across the region have announced significant natural gas discoveries, confirming its emergence as a **new energy frontier**. More recent finds have reinforced this momentum, demonstrating that exploration potential remains substantial.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the region may still hold up to **8.1 trillion cubic meters of undiscovered resources**. Yet resources left underground generate no benefit; **their value emerges only when they are developed and shared.** A considerable share of these reserves remains untapped, constrained by enduring challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, difficulties in attracting investment, and limited market integration

Confronting these challenges requires more than geology; it requires synergies, alignment, and robust policy regulation. This is the mission of **the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF)**. With its unique convening power, the EMGF offers an inclusive platform where Governments of Member Countries and Observers, energy industry key players through the 37 Members of the Gas Industry Advisory Committee (GIAC), and energy regulators from through the Regulatory Advisory Committee (RAAC).collaborate to design **roadmaps, foster cooperation, and optimize cross-border infrastructure**—transforming discoveries into shared value.

From Dispersion to Collective Action

Collaboration is no longer aspirational; it is already unfolding. **Gas supplies are already flowing within the region**, with part of this output exported to Europe. The recent **agreements between Cyprus and Egypt** exemplify this new mindset. Though bilateral in form, they embody a regional philosophy of complementarity rather than competition. Producers secure monetization, transit countries and operators optimize infrastructure utilization, consumers diversify supply and strengthen energy security, while investors benefit from greater stability. Such initiatives demonstrate **how pragmatic cooperation can transform isolated national strategies into collective resilience**

Gas in the Era of Transition

Building on this foundation, increasing natural gas production is vital for safeguarding energy security, yet **it must advance in parallel with climate objectives and the broader energy transition**. Natural gas remains indispensable to this vision: as the cleanest fossil fuel, it supports reliable supply while enabling the integration of renewables. At the same time, the EMGF is committed to ensuring that this pathway aligns with global decarbonization imperatives

That is why the EMGF launched its **Decarbonization Initiative**, which identified actionable recommendations. To operationalize these recommendations, the EMGF is spearheading:

- A **regional legal and regulatory framework** for carbon abatement.
- A **Carbon Intensity Certification mechanism** to enhance transparency and accountability.

The EMGF has defined **five institutional roles** to advance this agenda:

- Policy Harmonizer: aligning national regulatory frameworks.
- Carbon Intensity Certifier: establishing credible carbon-intensity standards.
- Sustainable Finance Enabler: unlocking green investment and financing channels.

- Knowledge Aggregator: consolidating expertise and sharing capacity.
- Technical Advisor: facilitating deployment of advanced low-carbon solutions.

These actions not only strengthen resilience within the region but also position the Eastern Mediterranean as a vital energy bridge between continents.

A Strategic Corridor Linking Continents

Building on this strategic role, the Eastern Mediterranean's geography endows it with unique leverage as an intercontinental energy corridor:

- **For Europe**, it offers diversification through LNG exports and interconnectors, while reinforcing decarbonization strategies.
- **For Africa**, Mediterranean hubs extend North African networks, enabling synergies in natural gas and renewable energy.
- **For the Gulf and Middle East**, it complements established producers, expands LNG trade routes, and lays the foundations for prospective hydrogen corridors.

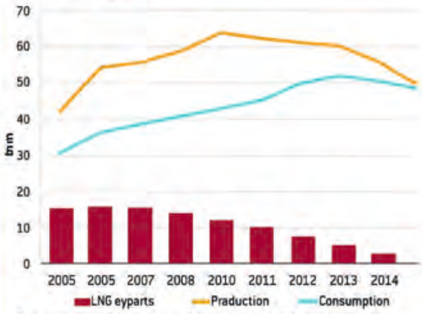
Conclusion: From Basin to Bridge

The Eastern Mediterranean corridor now stands at a historic juncture. Its resource base and strategic geography provide a powerful foundation, but its true promise lies in the cooperative framework embodied by the EMGF.

Through this framework, the region is transcending its role as a traditional supplier. It is becoming a bridge between continents, a platform for sustainable development, and a trusted partner in the global energy transition. This is the mission of the EMGF, and the vision we share with Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and beyond.

The Eastern Mediterranean gas landscape and a focus on Egypt

Source: Middle East Economic Survey



Data sources. BP. Energy Information Administration, Observaloire mediterraneen de l'

Egypt's LNG plants				
Site	No, or trains	Capacity (Mt/year)	Capacity (bcm/y)	Operating company
Idku	2	2 x 3.6	2 x 5.74	Egyptian
Damietta	1	1 x 4.8	1 x 7.56	SEGAS
Total	12	19	19	

LAPO PISTELLI

Director of Public Affairs at ENI

Sailing in stormy seas: **EU – Africa energy relations** in a **shifting world order**

In an increasingly polarized world, African countries are deepening regional integration efforts. From trade (the African Continental Free Trade Agreement), to health security (deepened after the Covid-19 pandemic), from digital innovation (lead by a youth-driven tech boom) to capacity building (a growing number of pan-African Universities) to – finally – regional power interconnections, the Continent is deepening its internal collaboration.

Increasing coordination is also enhancing Africa's influence on the global stage.. In his address to the UN General Assembly in September, Kenyan President William Ruto reiterated Africa's long-standing demand for two permanent and two non-permanent seats on the Security Council, declaring Africa's exclusion "unacceptable, unfair, and grossly unjust". African countries have become more and more vocal in expressing their frustration toward the West, with the Ukraine-Russia war and the Middle East crisis sharpening the sense of double standards.

All this is adding yet another layer of complexity for Europe, which is trying to reassess its relations with Africa, amid longstanding trust issues and Africa's attempts of building a less asymmetrical partnership.

African countries are increasingly vocal in expressing their own priorities – including the need to promote a just and equitable energy transition – to shape the global agenda accordingly. To engage with the international community, they have articulated a set of common messages on key issues, attempting to overcome differences between countries and regions in terms of economic size, development needs, and energy mix.

The value added of a strategic cooperation

The Europe–Africa partnership has the potential to leverage respective strengths and shared interests to expand energy access in Africa, in line with African governments' aspirations for sustainable development and growth.

Just to give some figures: Africa has some of the greatest energy potential in the world, both from renewable and traditional sources. The continent has the largest solar potential globally and is home to 30% of the world's critical mineral reserves, which are strategic for the energy transition. Yet it is also the continent with the largest number of people without access to energy – 600 million people in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to electricity. The sub-Saharan region is indeed one of the most affected by the impacts of climate change, despite being the least polluting, accounting for 4% of global emissions.

The transition for Africa is primarily about ensuring access to electricity. This is critical issue, as access to affordable energy is the main driver of economic development and a key enabler for a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): if universal energy access in Africa continues to be a challenge, most of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's targets will remain out of reach. Access to energy for a just transition is a priority of Eni's distinctive model. In 2024, the company supplied 80% of the natural gas it produced to local African markets, ensuring access to energy and contributing to economic growth.

Europe, on the other hand, is a market in need of energy. Yet, it boasts deep expertise in the energy sectors, coupled with advanced technology and stable regulatory frameworks, that can lead to the realization of truly mutually beneficial partnerships between Africa and Europe, leveraging their respective strengths and shared interests to improve energy access in Africa, in line with the continent's aspiration for development.

By joining forces, Africans and Europeans could accelerate the deployment of green technologies to respond to their respective domestic needs, helping also to propel the world's energy transition and simultaneously filling African countries' massive energy and climate financing gaps. On the eve of the G20 Summit in Brazil in November 2024, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa launched the "Scaling up renewables in Africa" campaign, aimed at accelerating access to renewable energy across the continent. One year after its launch, the campaign will culminate next November during the G20 Summit in Johannesburg. The Summit – hosted in South Africa, for the first time on the African continent - the first since the African Union joined the grouping – underscores the continent's increasingly proactive role in shaping the global agenda, while advancing its own development priorities.

This initiative is just one of several European-led efforts supporting Africa's energy transition. Back in 2021, as the world was emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union adopted the Global Gateway strategy to promote global infrastructure development through an investment of €300 billion over six years, half of which is allocated to Africa. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 subsequently forced Europe to rethink its energy security strategy, further emphasizing Africa's strategic importance in diversifying energy supplies as an immediate alternative to Russian gas.

Increasingly strategic in the international context — due to its resources, population, expanding market, strong influence in global settings, pivotal role it can play in the global decarbonization process— the African continent aims to strengthen its integration into global value chains to achieve its growth and socio-economic development ambitions.

Eni's distinctive and transitional approach

Within this framework, Eni has built on its long-standing and deeply rooted presence on the continent — having operated in Africa since 1954, the company now works in thirteen countries, where it has promoted a collaborative and win-win approach — playing a key role in supporting Africa's efforts to address the energy crisis. This distinctive approach has enabled Eni to swiftly identify new supply opportunities to ensure a secure and stable supply of natural gas to Italy and Europe — one of the fossil fuels with the lowest carbon footprint and a bridge energy source in the path toward decarbonization.

In a context where energy security has become more and more urgent, in April 2022, Eni expanded gas supplies from Algeria via the TransMed pipeline, contributing to increasing and diversifying gas export flows to Europe and Italy thanks to a long-established partnership with North Africa.

To ensure constant and reliable energy supplies for Italy and Europe, Eni has expanded the global portfolio of natural gas projects, including through the launch of the first LNG production in the Republic of Congo in 2022, tapping into the country's abundant gas resources, to supply the local electricity market and allowing Congo to become a leading LNG exporter. in Africa, with Europe as the main destination.

Eni's initiatives in Africa are not limited to traditional business activities but include renewable energy plants and infrastructure for the production, transport, and conversion of natural gas into electricity. Eni's cooperation with Africa now goes beyond the energy sector, with a particular focus on agriculture and other activities linked to sustainability and energy transition projects.

As part of its commitment to decarbonization, Eni has begun integrating African countries into the biofuel value chain — including Kenya, Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Rwanda, among others.

Eni is also committed to promote local development through a series of projects – in 2024, 38.8% of our local development investments were allocated to the African continent – with a particular focus on the sustainable and inclusive growth of the agricultural sector. The company is also distributing high-efficiency cookstoves through its Clean Cooking Programme (in Mozambique, the Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, and Angola, among others), with a commitment of providing improved cookstoves to 20 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030 (with 1.5 million reached by 2024). Clean cooking is a cornerstone of our pledge to enhance living standards in sub-Saharan Africa. For this reason, we have signed the "Clean Cooking Declaration: Making 2024 the Key Year for Clean Cooking", an initiative led by the International Energy Agency (IEA), which aims to speed up the global adoption of advanced cooking solutions. This is a vital step in guaranteeing access to affordable, dependable, sustainable and modern energy for everyone.

Moreover, Eni is investing in educational programs focused on the energy sector and professional training in Egypt, Mozambique, and Côte d'Ivoire and in new energy research centres, such as the Centre d'Excellence d'Oyo for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in the Republic of Congo and the Solar Lab research laboratory in Algeria for the study and testing of photovoltaic technologies.

Building on more than seventy years of presence on the continent, Eni strongly believes that achieving a just energy transition in Africa, capable of spurring local development, requires a pragmatic approach and recognizes the value of a dialogue that brings together African experts, international financial institutions, and private companies. Mutual understanding and open-minded dialogue are essential conditions for achieving ambitious goals together.

To support the production and exchange of knowledge for a just transition in Africa, in November 2023 Eni and Luiss Guido Carli University launched in Rome the International Network on African Energy Transition (INAET). The platform brings together institutions, universities, think tanks, and scholars from Africa and Europe to elevate African priorities and promote innovative solutions for the continent's transition. Following the success of the first event, a second INAET Conference was held Kenya, on April 8–9, 2025. The event marked a significant strengthening of the initiative, thanks also to the involvement of the International Finance Corporation (IFC, the commercial arm of the World Bank) and the sponsorships of Bayer, WTS Energy, and Alpha Group Logistic.

The high-level debate featured contributions from representatives from the African Union, the governments of Kenya, Tanzania, and Sierra Leone, as well as United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and African companies.

INAET represents an important step in building a bridge that closes the gap between Africa and Europe, fostering greater mutual understanding, a platform to raise awareness on the need for shared knowledge and of the importance of fully grasping each other's perspectives.

HILDE **VAUTMANS**

MEP (Renew Europe Group – Belguim) - Co-Chair of the Africa-EU Parliamentary Assembly

Turning Ambition into **Action**: **Empowering African Youth** to **Drive** a **New EU-Africa Partnership**

As the European Union and Africa continue to navigate the complexities of their partnership, it has become increasingly clear that the time for lofty ambitions and strategy documents is over. The EU-Africa partnership has reached a critical juncture, where the focus must shift from rhetoric to tangible action. At the heart of this transformation lies the continent's most valuable resource: its youth. It is imperative that we harness the energy, creativity, and innovative spirit of African young people to drive a new era of cooperation and growth.

The African continent is home to a growing population of over 1.3 billion people, with more than 60% under the age of 25. This demographic dividend presents a unique opportunity for the EU and Africa to collaborate on initiatives that address the continent's most pressing challenges, from food insecurity and climate change to infrastructure deficits and urbanisation. By supporting youth-led initiatives in areas such as smart agriculture, renewable energy, and sustainable urban planning, we can unlock the potential for a new era of African growth and development.

A key aspect of this vision is the concept of Circular Mobility, which seeks to transform the way African cities approach transportation. This is not just a matter of environmental sustainability; it is also an economic imperative, as it can create new opportunities for entrepreneurship and job creation. By promoting shared and green transport, localising the value chain, and innovating around the repair, remanufacture, and recycling of components, Africa can create a more sustainable and equitable mobility system. The European Union can play a crucial role in achieving this vision by sharing with African cities, its sustainable transportation expertise and experience, and collaborating on initiatives such as knowledge transfer, capacity building, and joint investments in green infrastructure.

In addition, brain drain remains a significant threat to Africa's economic development. Every year, thousands of skilled African professionals migrate to developed countries, taking their talents and expertise with them. This is a loss not only for Africa but also for the European Union, which invests heavily in training and education programs only to see the benefits accrue to other regions.

We must prioritize developing an ecosystem that retains and nurtures African talent rather than training it for export. By doing so, we can ensure that the skills and expertise of these professionals are leveraged to drive innovation and growth on the continent, instead of being lost to other parts of the world. The EU has a critical role to play in catalysing this youth ecosystem by collaborating with African partners to develop initiatives that promote talent retention, entrepreneurship, and economic development.

Existing initiatives such as Erasmus+ and the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme provide a solid foundation for skills transfer and knowledge circulation. However, these programmes must be strategically linked to local enterprise, with a focus on supporting startups and initiatives that drive circular mobility and sustainable urban solutions. The AU-EU Youth Action Lab, with its Innovation and Entrepreneurship Grants, is a prime example of the kind of targeted youth-centric funding, required to drive this agenda forward.

To close the loop on the 'brain-drain', the EU-Africa partnership must implement policy interventions that create an enabling environment for young people to thrive at home. This includes providing "Innovation Retention"

grants to successful African graduates of EU-funded training programmes, conditional on establishing their ventures in Africa. Further enhancement of regulatory frameworks, for example by harmonising tax breaks, or creation of new frameworks is also essential. With the EU and AU working together to fast-track policies that favour local skills retention.

The time for strategy documents and lofty ambitions is over. It is time for the EU and Africa to move beyond aid and elevate their partnership to become an engine of global, sustainable growth. By strategically investing in youth-led initiatives and creating an eco-system that retains and nurtures African talent, we can make the African Rising chapter a permanent reality. The EU must double down on its commitment to fostering an environment where African skills are developed, nurtured, and retained. The future of the EU-Africa partnership depends on it.

As we move forward, it is crucial that we utilise all available tools and instruments to empower young people through capacity building, a key focus of the Global Gateway strategy. By leveraging this approach, we can create opportunities for them to drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and growth, and provide the necessary support and resources to ensure their success. The EU-Africa partnership has the potential to be a game-changer for the continent, but it requires a fundamental shift in approach. We must move beyond the traditional donor-recipient model and towards a more equal, more sustainable, and more mutually beneficial partnership.

In conclusion, the EU-Africa partnership is at a critical juncture. We can choose to continue down the path of rhetoric and strategy documents, or we can take bold action to empower African youth and drive a new era of cooperation and growth. The choice is clear. It is time to turn ambition into action, and to make the African Rising chapter a permanent reality. The future of the EU-Africa partnership depends on it, and by working together, we can create a more equal, sustainable, and mutually beneficial partnership that benefits both continents.

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JÉRÉMIE **PELLET**
Chief Executive Officer of Expertise France

Bridging the Divide: Translating Ambitions into **Tangible Outcomes**: **Make** the **EU-Africa** axis count on a **global scale**

EXPERTISE FRANCE GROUPE AFD

Mobilizing technical expertise and European dialogue to serve the African continent

Sustainable infrastructure development is one of the key drivers of growth and stability on the African continent. Against a backdrop of climate emergency, rapid urbanization, and changing basic needs among populations, supporting investment, particularly through the mobilization of businesses and public-private partnerships (PPPs), offers a strategic pathway to serving the public interest. This is one of the key methods for implementing the European Global Gateway strategy, in which cooperation agencies such as Expertise France are working with partner countries to develop infrastructure.

For example, since 2021, Expertise France has been leading the multi-country facility of the Agence française de développement Group dedicated to these partnerships. It is designed to support African governments and regional institutions in creating an investment-friendly environment by combining technical support, institutional strengthening, and operational support.

This facility has three main objectives: to consolidate the legal and institutional frameworks of partner countries, to develop a portfolio of sustainable projects that are attractive to investors, and to strengthen dialogue between public and private actors. Deployed in West Africa, Central Africa, and East Africa, its scope is gradually expanding, notably to Ethiopia through the ECOREF project, which combines the energy and health sectors.

Experience has shown that the regional level is a powerful accelerator. In 2022, WAEMU adopted a regional directive on PPPs, which is already being transposed into national law, paving the way for the harmonization of practices and the emergence of the first projects benefiting several member states. In the CEMAC region (Central Africa), a similar dynamic took shape in 2025 with the adoption of a regional PPP directive and the implementation of a structuring project, implemented by Expertise France to the tune of €22 million, dedicated to the major road corridors linking Douala, N'Djamena, Libreville, and Bangui, which are essential for trade and subregional integration. These regulatory advances demonstrate the ability of African institutions to establish common and credible rules to attract private capital and undertake large-scale projects.

In several countries, the results are already visible. In Côte d'Ivoire, support provided to the National Steering Committee for these partnerships has enabled more than a hundred infrastructure projects to be identified. Around ten of these projects, covering the transport, health, and digital sectors, are now being structured. In Djibouti, long-term support for the Ministry of Economy has led to the creation of a unit dedicated to public-private investment and the selection of a portfolio of eleven priority projects. A second phase, now underway, aims to transform these intentions into concrete projects, for example in the field of construction materials and asphalting. In Cameroon, 22 projects have been selected as priorities, including the development of local infrastructure such as the Ngoumou dry port. Finally, in Mauritania, support for the authorities has encouraged the emergence of innovative projects in the tourism, energy, and sanitation sectors, contributing to sustainable economic diversification.

Beyond these concrete initiatives, Expertise France's support has helped strengthen the capacities of more than 500 public officials, who have been trained in the analysis, structuring, and negotiation of complex contracts. The administrations supported now have robust legal and technical tools at their disposal, strengthening their autonomy and credibility with private investors. This work also helps to establish a culture of public-private dialogue that is essential for the development of sustainable and inclusive projects.

This initiative, driven by French expertise and in close partnership with institutions in these countries, particularly in West Africa, is fully in line with the European Global Gateway strategy. It illustrates the desire to rethink the way cooperation projects are designed, by strengthening multilateral dialogue in the service of joint construction between Europe and Africa for the implementation of structuring projects.

CECILE EDORH

Circular economy policies analysis, Circulearth

Rethinking EU–Africa ties: The circular economy as a new pact of shared sovereignty

Europe and Africa are bound by history, geography, and necessity. Yet their economic relationship is fraying: total trade between the two continents fell from €467 billion in 2023 to €355 billion in 2024. Behind the numbers lies a deeper imbalance. Europe fears material scarcity and industrial dependency; Africa, meanwhile, still exports raw minerals but imports finished goods, forfeiting most of the value they contain.

At the same time, a new kind of globalisation is taking shape—less about trade volumes than about control over materials, skills and technologies. In this emerging order, the circular economy could replace extraction with co-creation and dependency with mutual sovereignty.

A sharp rise in EU demand for raw materials by 2030 is expected, but the Union is still far from meeting its 2030 target of 24% circularity (with the 2023 circular material use rate only at 11.8%). A renewed EU-Africa partnership could allow both continents to reach their environmental and development goals.

From crisis to opportunity

The catalyst for this rethink came from Beijing rather than Brussels or Addis Ababa. China's decision in October 2025 to tighten export controls on rare earth elements (REEs)—already refining over 90 % of global supply—sent tremors through European industry. As a result, many European firms have halted production, with thousands facing supply shortages in less than a month.

Europe's answer has been swift. The RESourceEU initiative translates anxiety into strategy, building on the 2030 target of Critical Raw Materials (CRM) Act goal of 15% of CRM demand to be met by recycling. Urban-mining projects—recovering metals from old electronics and infrastructure—already save around 900 billion kg of virgin ore annually. Yet less than 1% of rare earths are currently recycled, and the World Bank predicts CRM demand will rise by 500% by 2050. Circularity, once framed as an environmental virtue, has become a matter of industrial survival.

Closing the loop is a global need. Since European supply chains stretch deep into Africa, circular sovereignty in Europe depends on circular opportunity in Africa.

Africa's turn: From extraction to transformation

For decades, African economies have supplied the ores powering global industry without capturing their value. The continent holds 55% of global cobalt and almost half of the world's manganese reserves, yet sub-Saharan Africa retains barely 40% of the potential revenue from these resources. That gap represents the difference between dependency and development.

Governments from Ghana to Zimbabwe are beginning to act, tightening export rules and demanding local processing. As the Democratic Republic of Congo's Foreign Minister recently put it, partners should "participate in transformation before export". If Europe takes that invitation seriously—by co-investing in refining, battery-recycling, and repair industries—it could help build African industrial capacity while securing its own supply resilience. In short, the same factories that reduce Europe's dependency could increase Africa's prosperity.

The EU has already agreed to renew the terms with the AU with a framework for cooperation to "ensure that European companies restore the areas they have damaged" — beyond the dedicated global Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDD).

Shared rules, uneven effects

This interdependence, however, also exposes tension. Europe's regulatory drive—its Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), Packaging Waste Directive (PWD), and many other CE-policies —is reshaping global supply chains. These measures will make production cleaner but could hit African exporters who lack the resources to comply.

E-waste provides a telling example. Countries such as Ghana and Nigeria manage significant volumes of European electronic waste, often through informal recyclers. Across Africa, informal work still represents around 85% of total employment. If EU rules

raise environmental standards without supporting transition costs, they risk excluding exactly those workers who already practise circularity on the ground.

A just circular transition must therefore recognise, train, and finance these workers rather than pushing them out of the value chain. The first African Regional Meeting of Waste Picker Leaders in 2025 signalled a significant step in their formalisation to better advocate for their rights and safety.

Theoretically, the Global South circular economy could generate 7 to 8 million job opportunities worldwide. In Africa's case, the continent needs more economic diversification and job redeployment; if not, one million CE jobs are at risk.

The lesson is clear: regulatory ambition in Europe must be matched by investment diplomacy abroad. Otherwise, the circular economy risks reproducing the inequalities it seeks to correct.

A Continental Plan, and a Common Horizon

The African Union's Continental Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP 2024–2034) provides a framework for such cooperation. Co-funded by the EU, it identifies eight priority sectors—three horizontal (water, waste, and energy) and five vertical (agri-food and fisheries, transport and mobility, tourism, industry - construction, packaging and plastics, electronics and textiles -, and mining). The AU requires each member state to adopt a national plan by 2026.

Thanks to the African Circular Economy Fund managed by the African Development Bank (AfDB), 12 Member States have already established national CE roadmaps (Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Rwanda, Seychelles, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Ivory Coast, and Tunisia), while four others are in the process of drafting or securing funding for their plans (Egypt, Morocco, Mozambique, and Zambia).

This alignment is more than bureaucratic. If implemented through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which could raise intra-African trade by 45 % and add $276 billion to GDP by 2045, circular production chains could finally operate across borders. A recycled-materials hub in Ghana could feed a repair industry in Nigeria, which in turn supplies refurbished components to European manufacturers. Circularity becomes continental before it becomes global.

Building sovereignty, not dependency

For the EU, the circular economy promises to cut reliance on fragile imports; for Africa, it offers a route to industrialisation that does not repeat the ecological or social costs of past models. But success requires a new kind of partnership—neither donor–recipient nor raw-material–buyer, but co-investors in shared resilience.

Three principles should guide it. First, technology transfer and finance must accompany new standards: the European Investment Bank and African Development Bank could co-fund urban-mining and local refining plants, conditional on fair labour and skills-transfer commitments. Second, informal workers must be formally recognised, integrated into Extended Producer Responsibility schemes (like in South Africa) and given access to micro-finance and training. And third, policy coherence is essential: trade, development and industrial policies on both continents should converge around circular goals rather than work at cross-purposes.

Under the Global Gateway strategy, the EU established last year the EU Circular Economy Resource Centre, which facilitates peer-to-peer exchanges and partnerships between EU and third-country stakeholders, and the "SWITCH to Circular Economy in East and Southern Africa, and the Indian Ocean (ESA-IO)" programme, a 5-year €40 million programme, which follows a South-South Twinning approach.

Cooperation would turn circularity from a compliance burden into a development engine. It would allow African youth—who will make up 75% of the continent's population by 2030—to build the repair, recycling, and innovation industries of the future, while Europe secures the materials it needs for its green transition.

From extraction to reciprocity

What began as Europe's response to Chinese export restrictions could thus evolve into more: Circularity links Europe's search for strategic autonomy with Africa's pursuit of value addition; it turns interdependence from weakness into strength.

Definitions of CE are also very much Western-oriented. It might be an opportunity to get a new Global South-based definition that could emphasise redistribution and fairness, principles that are rooted in day-to-day African circular practices, and slowly lead to circular societies.

If both continents align their policies and investments—Europe focusing on material efficiency, Africa on transformative capacity—the result could be a paradigm shift: a partnership that measures power not by what each extracts, but by what both can reuse.

The circular economy, in this sense, is not merely about recycling—it is about rewriting the political economy of cooperation. Europe's sovereignty and Africa's industrial future are, quite literally, made of the same materials.

The EU-Namibia Partnership

BARRY ANDREWS

MEP, (Renew Europe Group – Ireland)

During my recent EU mission to Namibia, I had in mind another Irishman, Seán MacBride, who served as the UN High Commissioner for Namibia during the 1970s in an important period in Namibia's history pre-independence.

Namibia is a stable democracy with robust institutions, free press and strong multilateral credentials, but faces persistent inequality, youth unemployment (35–40%), and a heavy dependence on imports for food and energy.

Political and economic relations were established in 1990 along with development cooperation. The EU aims to contribute to the stability, economic, environmental and social development of Namibia.

As the world's largest trading bloc, the EU and its 27 Member States operate under a unified trade policy. This simplifies market access, reduces trade barriers and creates opportunities for economies like Namibia to engage with a stable, high-value market.

Namibia benefits via the Southern African Development Community (SADC), from a free trade agreement with the European Union. Namibia can with this agreement shield sensitive products from full liberalisation and deploy safeguards when imports from the EU are growing too quickly. The agreement also contains a chapter on sustainable development and cooperation.

Thanks to the agreement, Namibia has duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market. The EU is also the largest and most diversified trading partner of Namibia, and Namibians enjoy a positive trade surplus with the EU—a key to sustainable growth. This growing partnership strengthens our ties and creates jobs and opportunities that directly benefit the Namibian population.

The EU also directly supports Namibia to contribute to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development, prosperity, peace and stability.

The strategic framework for EU-Namibia cooperation is outlined in the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for 2021-2027, which aims to support Namibia's sustainable development. It focuses on fostering stability, reducing socio-economic inequalities, and promoting equitable access to quality services for all Namibians.

The programme is structured around key priority areas: foundational skills and education, inclusive green growth, good governance and gender equality.

It is in that context that last month, September 2025, a high-level European Union delegation visited Namibia to reinforce bilateral ties. The mission was led by myself as Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Development and the Commissioner for International Partnerships Jozef Síkela. Also on the mission were eight senior Members of the Parliament Committee and Mrs Hilde Vautmans, Chair of the Delegation to the Africa-EU Parliamentary Assembly.

The visit aimed to:

- Assess EU investments in Namibia's green hydrogen and clean energy sectors.
- Strengthen EU–Namibia political and economic cooperation.
- Engage with national authorities, parliamentarians, civil society and the private sector.
- Showcase EU-supported projects under the Global Gateway strategy, particularly in skills development, education and job creation.

The delegation's three-day programme combined political dialogue, parliamentary engagement and field visits, seeking to demonstrating the 360-degree model: infrastructure + skills + governance.

Firstly, President Nandi-Ndaitwah welcomed the EU delegation, reaffirming Namibia's commitment to the Strategic Partnership on Green Hydrogen and Critical Raw Materials. She expressed readiness to expand collaboration on clean energy, oil and gas, education and governance, stressing job creation for youth and women.

Commissioner Síkela underlined the EU's long-term partnership, noting that €1.3 billion in loans and grants under Global Gateway should leverage up to €20 billion in private investment for Namibia's green industrialisation. He emphasised the EU's "360-degree approach": combining infrastructure, skills, and regulatory frameworks.

In the meeting, I echoed the shared vision of sustainable, mutually beneficial value chains, insisting on transparency and accountability as pillars of cooperation.

In my view, the President showed as pragmatic, dynamic and forward-looking, with deep understanding of both national and global contexts. Her leadership and visible gender representation in government (50 % women ministers) was acknowledged by all present.

Afterward, we undertook a field visit to the HOPE Initiative in Tobias Hanyeko informal settlement (Windhoek) with:

- 60 000 residents, extreme poverty, 6–8 persons per household.
- EU partnership since 2011; six grants received.
- Focus on early-childhood education, birth registration, gender-based violence, mental health, upcycling/recycling, and women/youth leadership.

- The key messages and learnings from that trip were:
-
- EU support reaches marginalised communities through small, grassroots organisations.
- Gender-based violence and youth exclusion remain acute.
- Civil society fills gaps left by weak social services and decentralisation.

The delegation, together with Prime Minister Elijah Ngurare, then went on to inaugurate Namibia's first solar-powered green hydrogen facility, a joint venture between Belgium's CMB.Tech and Namibia's Ohlthaver & List Group, with German co-funding.

As Commissioner Síkela said, it was "*A tangible start to Namibia's green hydrogen future under our Global Gateway 360° approach*." In my view, it is a model of how public and private investment can generate shared prosperity.

The EU delegation the next day visited the HyIron Oshivela Plant, Africa's first zero-emission green-iron facility using locally produced hydrogen. It is expected to have an annual production of 1 million tonnes of green iron and create 6 000 in construction including 900 permanent jobs. This was example of prosperity built on the highest environmental and social standards.

Our conclusions were as follows:
- Namibia remains one of Africa's most unequal societies despite stability.
- High youth unemployment, weak rural education, and persistent gender violence.
- Green hydrogen and critical-raw-materials sectors can transform Namibia's economy, but expectations about job numbers must be realistic.
- Potential tension between economic growth and environmental protection—EU support should address both.
- Gender-based violence is pervasive.

Our recommendations are as follows:
1. Ensure transparent governance of major energy investments
2. Promote exchanges with EU technical schools and companies.
3. Prioritise job creation for youth and women.
4. Strengthen social-protection systems in informal settlements.
5. Integrate climate resilience, biodiversity protection and water security into all projects.
6. Develop community-benefit frameworks for green-energy investments.

The EU mission confirmed that the EU's Global Gateway has a potential to offer a coherent and forward-looking framework for cooperation with Namibia, linking infrastructure, education, governance and private investment under one vision. Its promise is clear: to turn Namibia into a regional hub for green industrialisation and a model for sustainable growth in Africa. Yet the success of this partnership will depend less on ambition and more on implementation capacity.

Namibia remains a stable and values-aligned partner, with a strong democratic record, solid institutions and abundant renewable resources. However, the administration still faces major challenges in translating vision into action. Ministries and agencies often lack the technical and human resources to manage complex public–private partnerships, while decision-making processes remain highly centralised and risk-averse. The Government's mindset, though rhetorically progressive, is still rooted in traditional, state-centric practices that slow innovation and deter private investors. Talk of compulsory state ownership in major projects, even if not enacted, has already created hesitation among European companies.

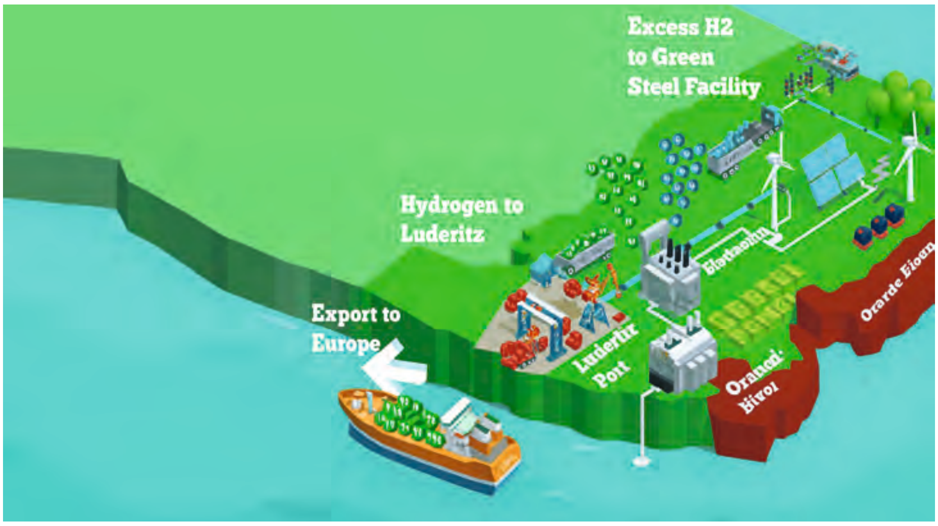
The investment climate therefore needs clearer rules, faster decisions and stronger governance. Transparent procurement, digital permitting, and public data on project performance would help build confidence. Equally, labour-safety standards and environmental safeguards must evolve to match the scale of the green-hydrogen and mining industries. Water scarcity is a particular concern, demanding cumulative impact assessments and basin-level planning. At the same time, the social dimension cannot be secondary: Global Gateway's credibility rests on delivering visible benefits to ordinary Namibians—education, jobs, gender equality and community inclusion.

Human capital is Namibia's most pressing bottleneck. The projected shortage of skilled workers could undermine every industrial objective. Programmes such as IGNITE GH2 and the Hydrogen Academy are crucial starting points, but they must expand rapidly, with deeper links to European training institutions and industry partnerships. Building a skilled and diverse workforce is the only way to ensure that the green transition becomes a source of opportunity rather than frustration.

Despite these limitations, the partnership's potential is immense. The projects visited demonstrate what can be achieved when European technology and finance align with Namibian ambition. The Global Gateway's 360-degree approach—connecting infrastructure, skills and governance—has already begun to take shape. What is now required is discipline, realism and continuity: focusing on execution, ensuring that regulatory and fiscal reforms accompany investments, and keeping dialogue open at every level of government.

In short, Namibia is a reliable and promising partner, but one whose institutional maturity still lags behind its aspirations. The EU can play a decisive role not only through financing but by supporting governance reform, decentralisation, and youth participation. If both sides maintain this commitment, Namibia could indeed become a continental reference for how green industrialisation and social justice can advance together. If inertia prevails, however, the risk is that Gateway projects remain isolated successes in an unchanged system. The mission's clear takeaway is therefore that progress will depend on turning shared ambition into accountable, results-driven and socially responsible governance.

My only regret from the trip was that I did not get to visit Seán MacBride Street in the centre of Windhoek. Maybe on my next trip to Namibia.



ANNA SOPHIE HERKEN

Managing Director of GIZ

Turning ambition into action: How **Africa and Europe can deliver economic growth through partnership** and **investment**

Europe seeks deeper engagement with Africa – geopolitically, economically, strategically. Never has the political rhetoric surrounding the partnership been so ambitious: The European Global Gateway initiative now promises over €400 billion in sustainable investment worldwide, with more than €150 billion dedicated to the African continent. At the Global Gateway Forum in October 2025, the EU announced new guarantee agreements worth €742 million. The EU-AU summit spoke of an "equal alliance". New raw materials and hydrogen partnerships are being announced nearly every month. In September 2025, the EU pledged an additional €1.3 billion to support Namibia's transition to green energy and critical raw materials. At the same time, many African countries are advancing bold reforms – improving governance, strengthening regional integration, and creating more attractive conditions for private investment. These efforts underline Africa's active role in shaping its own development trajectory.

But while ambitions flourish, implementation is stalling. Investments are still sluggish. According to the UN, there is an annual shortfall of four trillion US dollars needed to achieve the SDGs worldwide. In Africa alone, the need for infrastructure investment is estimated at 130 to 170 billion US dollars per year. The actual level of funding is less than 80 billion US dollars per year – leaving over half of the investment needs unmet. And: less than 10 percent of the actual funding stems from the private sector, underscoring the urgent need to scale up private investment. Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa in 2023 was three percent lower than in the previous year. In 2018 and 2022, less than one percent of German FDI went to Africa – even though Germany ranks among the ten most important sources of FDI on the continent.

Investors report regulatory hurdles, project fragmentation, political risk, and a lack of planning certainty. In many countries, there are simply no investment-ready projects – even though capital would be available. Therefore, a key question is: How can European ambition be turned into African impact? The answer is obvious: it cannot be done without the private sector. To achieve this, Europe must adjust the rules of the game to better incentivize private engagement. This includes risk sharing, reducing bureaucracy, and funding innovative investment vehicles.

At the same time, Europe already holds a unique position: it has world-leading technology providers in green hydrogen, energy, and infrastructure; in-depth expertise in building resilient value chains; and investors with long-term interests – including in developing markets. Africa, in turn, has a young, dynamic population – by 2050, more than one quarter of the global population will be African – along with 60 percent of the world's solar energy potential. Moreover, Africa features a growing start-up scene with thousands of start-ups in the tech space. What's lacking is an effective mechanism that meaningfully connects all sides. The EU's Global Gateway initiative is designed to fill that gap — as a strategic investment tool to link African potential with European capabilities, capital and technology.

Private investment is driven by economic incentives as well as clear and conducive regulatory and policy frameworks. These include planning certainty through reliable regulation, access to investable projects through project development, risk mitigation for example via blended finance, and strong local partners capable of operational implementation.

This is precisely where a range of approaches jointly developed by GIZ on behalf of the on behalf of the German Government, together with European and African partners—comes into play. GET.invest, co-financed by the EU and several member states, is now one of the most successful platforms for promoting private investment in renewable energy in Africa. More than 600 projects and companies have been made investment-ready through targeted support, 280 are currently in the pipeline, and more than 120 have been brought to financial close with a volume of €540 million of catalytic financing. It addresses a key gap: the transformation of good ideas into bankable business models.

Another example is ICAMA – the *Innovative Capital Mobilisation in Africa* Initiative. This new initiative, which is being implemented by GIZ in collaboration with development finance institutions, investors, and fund managers, aims to mobilise more capital for start-ups and growth firms in Africa. At least three innovative financing instruments are being jointly developed to address existing challenges in Africa's venture capital market. This gives European investors the opportunity to diversify their portfolios and tap into a new, high-growth market, while also giving innovative companies in Africa the chance to grow further, create jobs, and local value creation – a win-win for everyone.

The initiative SCALED – Scaling Capital for Sustainable Development – has been launched as a new platform for mobilising private investment in challenging markets. Multiple governments (Germany, Canada, Denmark, France, South Africa, United Kingdom) and private institutional investors (Allianz, AXA, La Caisse, Zurich Insurance Group) have joined forces to establish a structure in which public and private investors develop standards and processes to make blended finance investments more predictable and scalable. The aim is to activate billions in private funds for sustainable projects through clear structures, uniform ESG criteria, and reduced transaction costs. GIZ is managing the initiative's Secretariat on behalf of BMZ.

The potential is also evident in other areas: Africa holds vast critical raw materials, yet much of the processing happens outside the continent. Europe can help change this through joint ventures, local technology development, and job creation – while advancing its Critical Raw Materials Act. At the same time, Africa's start-up scene is growing fast, especially in fintech, cleantech, and agritech. Hubs in Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, and South Africa are gaining global attention, though many regions still lack funding, infrastructure, and support for entrepreneurs.

GIZ and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development brings its strengths to bear in all these areas: as a bridge builder between governments, the private sector and the market, and civil society; as an implementing agency with operational depth; and as a platform for dialogue and partnership. In the last five years alone, it has supported over 200 projects related to private capital mobilisation, with a volume of over €3 billion. At the same time, development cooperation plays a strategically important role in creating enabling frameworks for private investment in the first place. After all, by investing in training skilled workers, alleviating poverty, advancing digital transformation, and strengthening the rule of law and good governance, we lay the foundation for a stable and attractive environment for business and investment. On this foundation technology, capital, and entrepreneurship translate into lasting local impacts.

What matters now is implementation. The focus must shift to translating Europe's political ambitions into tangible results. This requires conducive frameworks, flexible financing solutions, stronger alignment between development cooperation, finance, and trade promotion, and a genuine partnership with the African private sector.

The private sector is not a sideshow, but rather the lever that turns declarations of intent into concrete development and helps achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for all. If Europe intends to deliver on its promises to Africa, it must take the next step and back its ambitions with investment.

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Health autonomy starts with a renewed vision on the African continent

INGEBORG TER LAAK

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'No one will ever be truly safe until everyone is safe.' These words, which gained worldwide attention during the corona pandemic, perfectly capture the need for solidarity and a global approach to health on all continents. In that light, the European Union would do well not to solely focus on the economic and geopolitical importance of the African continent.

A new world order is rapidly emerging. Trump's presidency has sharply challenged all relations. America's decision to cut USAID's funding has severely affected healthcare on the African continent, has shown Africa's dependence on financial support and has made the continent rely on Europe as its biggest donor. This is a huge responsibility for Europe and comes at a time where the European Union is critically examining itself and, primarily, has to become self-sufficient in its own security, energy and competitiveness.

However, for the major issues—global affairs such as migration, climate change and yes, also health—Europe cannot deliver without cooperating with its neighbouring countries. The African continent wants to assume its role in the new world order and Europe has the resources and the responsibility to be a reliable partner when it comes to tackling global issues, including reliable and affordable healthcare. The European Union should care for a long lasting, constructive partnership with the African continent. That includes investment programmes, but also sharing knowledge and providing services such as building better access to healthcare. Only sustainable cooperation can contribute to stability and an equal partnership.

Shared vision

Such a partnership begins with a shared vision for the African continent. This can become visible in various ways. First, the name 'Africa' does not do justice to the diversity and complexity of a continent consisting of fifty-four countries and equal in size to Europe, the United States and China combined. Just as a single strategy for all of Africa fails to capture the diverse conflicts, economies and local challenges on healthcare. It is unrealistic to think that Europe can simply 'copy paste' its health system to an African version. Cultural values influence perceptions of health.

Some countries have modern and developed health infrastructures, where national healthcare is set up and is generally accessible for the population. In other countries, we are seeing that these steps still need to be taken. For instance: Tuberculosis is still a present disease, but is perfectly preventable and treatable if the right healthcare and information is accessible. Many more examples are to be named which could be easily prevented, such as cholera, dengue, rabies and yellow fever. These diseases cost unnecessary life, cause unnecessary pain to people and are preventable with reliable and affordable access to healthcare.

Global health should be a priority in foreign policy. The European Union should stress the importance of global health and equal health access on all continents, in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

Mutual benefit

When we talk about global health, it is important to remember it is not just about preventing or treating diseases. Global health is closely connected to economic well-being, the environment and safety. You cannot really look at global health on its own without thinking about these other factors, because they all affect each other.

When countries are doing well economically, they can spend more money on healthcare, education and clean water. People who live in wealthier places usually have better access to good food, doctors and medicine. Warmer climates can spread diseases carried by mosquitoes like malaria and dengue fever to new areas. Climate change disrupts farming, which leads to food shortages and malnutrition. Wars and political instability often break down healthcare systems and make it difficult for people to get the care they need. If we really want to improve global health, we need to look at all these factors together.

Therefore, if the EU does not support the African continent on these issues, other countries with less good intentions will gain influence. Specifically, Russia and China are strategically getting boots on the ground on the African continent. They invest in critical infrastructure, safety and security. Usually, they do this for their own strategic gains and do not ask much from these countries in return. Global healthcare is simply not their priority.

The problem is that at this time, the EU cannot be a good alternative partner when it is competing with a bag of money from Russia or China. Humanitarian safeguards are important and cannot be overlooked, but if we want to support health systems and cooperate on climate change and safety issues, we need to reflect on how much moral demands we want to impose on our African partners. The main focus should be on mutual beneficial relationships. Support needs to be aimed at helping the African continent to become self-sufficient on healthcare. This cannot be done without listening to our African partners and to their needs and desires. Exchanging knowledge and providing services must go hand-in-hand with on the ground realities. A renewed cooperation asks for a renewed vision.

European Commission

Identification, characterisation and ranking of Strategic Corridors in Africa

CUSA PROJECT ▪ PHASE 1

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