EU-AFRICA SUMMIT: FOCUS ON YOUTH, SECURITY, INVESTMENT
Leaders of the European Union and the African Union are attending the fifth EU-Africa Summit in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, on 29 and 30 November. The official agenda is dedicated to the youth but migration, security, investment and trade are expected to dominate the talks.
Libya human bondage risks overshadowing Africa-EU summit

Europe’s quick fix deals can undermine young Africans and spur them to leave

Migration think-tank: Europe is ‘obsessed’ with short-term solution

French MEP: Europe needs to boost African development

EU-Africa summit conclusions blocked over forced return of migrants
African leaders are expected to warn Europeans that their way of outsourcing the migration crisis to Libya, in apparent disregard for human rights, risks opening old wounds in the heavy history of the two continents.

The leaders of the 28 EU countries and their counterparts from the 27 members of the African Union will meet in Abidjan, the capital of Côte d’Ivoire, on 29-30 November.

At the summit, leaders will discuss the future of EU-Africa relations and focus on investing in youth. This is a key priority for Africa and the EU as 60% of the African population is under the age of 25.

The EU is facing an unprecedented arrival of young African migrants, who cross the Mediterranean, at the peril of their lives, most often from the shores of Libya to Italy.

The EU insists that the summit is not about migration, but about partnership and development aid. EU Foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini stressed that point last Wednesday in the European Parliament in Brussels.

“I would like to stress that this is not a summit on migration, it is a summit on partnership between the African Union and the European Union, which goes well beyond migration issues, but which of course, can give us the opportunity to have joint actions between the African Union and the European Union on the situation of migrants in Libya, not just today, because unfortunately this is a situation that has lasted for years.”

Mogherini is in an awkward position regarding the situation of migrants in Libya. Her native country, Italy, cobbled radical solutions to contain the flow of migrants there, entrusting the Libyan authorities to do whatever they can to stop refugees from entering its waters.

Similarly, the EU executive arm

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is also trying to find an answer to the plight of migrants in Libya, which is acceptable under human rights standards.

Scant information is available about the situation of migrants in Libya, a country still in havoc. The US network CNN triggered a wave of condemnation when it aired footage ten days ago of an apparent auction where black men were presented and sold to North African buyers as potential farmhands.

Low-resolution images, apparently taken at a market in Libya earlier this year, showed humans auctioned at a slave market for the equivalent of €400.

In an interview to the international French TV channel France24, the President of Côte d’Ivoire Alassane Ouattara expressed his “disgust” at the revelations, demanding that those guilty of these crimes be brought to justice by the International Criminal Court. He said the issue would be on the agenda at the Africa-EU Summit his country will be hosting.

Many politicians in Africa have expressed their outrage at the situation in Libya — especially in West Africa from where most migrants originate. The President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou felt particularly revolted by the reports, summoning the Libyan ambassador to Niger and demanding the International Court of Justice investigate Libya for trading slaves.

Meanwhile, as France24 reported, the foreign minister of Burkina Faso, Alpha Barry, told the press that he had also summoned the Libyan ambassador to the capital Ouagadougou for consultations.

The fate of African migrants stranded in Libya has triggered strong warnings from the United Nations. But it seems that the CNN footage walked the extra mile.

Mogherini was questioned about the EU’s strategy of outsourcing the migration crisis to foreign countries such as Libya and Turkey, which received billions to prevent Syrian refugees from crossing to Greece.

She said the situation was different on two counts: first, the migrants stranded in Libya were not legitimate asylum seekers like those fleeing the war in Syria. And second, different international bodies were in charge.

“When it comes to Turkey, it is mainly refugees from Syria; when it comes to Libya, it is mainly migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and the relevant international laws apply in different manners and the relevant UN agencies are different – the UNHCR on one side, especially in Turkey, and the IOM especially in Libya.”

In fact, the EU had other ideas for the summit. After decades of ups and downs, the EU wants to overcome the paternalistic donor-recipient relation which characterises its dealings with the African continent, and open a new page of equal-to-equal political partnerships.

This is the fifth summit between the EU and Africa. The last one, in 2014, brought together more than 60 EU and African leaders. At the time, the EU was discussing bilateral cooperation plans with figures in the millions of euros.

Then the so-called “EU Trust Fund for Africa” was signed at the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015 and the ambition was raised in the billions figure. However, the member states provided little to the fund, with the bulk of contributions coming from the EU budget.

Last month the European Commission told member states they needed to immediately chip in an extra €225m for migration-related projects in Africa due to run this year and early next.

Under the central theme of “investing in youth”, this year’s EU-Africa summit will aim to strengthen the partnership in order to address demographic dynamics in an orderly way.

The EU finances development programmes and initiatives benefiting multiple countries across Africa. Most of the funding comes from the European development fund (EDF), which has a budget of €30.5bn for the period 2014-2020.

On Thursday the European Commission defined concrete areas of investments for its External Investment Plan. The new plan will mobilise €44bn of sustainable investment for Africa and the EU neighbourhood countries.

The Commission singles out five areas of investment, so-called “investment windows” in which the first actions of the External Investment Plan (EIP) will be implemented. These investment areas are crucial for the development of countries in Africa and the EU neighbourhood.
Africa’s youth will take center stage at the EU-Africa Summit this week. For Europeans, the most important outcome is migration deals with Africa. Reports of alleged slavery in Libya should be a warning that quick fixes to curbing migration can undermine young Africans, argues Marije Balt.

Marije Balt is director of SpringFactor, a post-conflict expert and former diplomat, engaged in peacebuilding and conflict transformation since 1995.

The EU-Africa Summit on youth will take place in Abidjan, nicknamed ‘Manhattan of the Tropics’. This city is the largest of Ivory Coast, a West African country. Though it has one of the fastest growing economies on the continent, its youth does not reap the benefits. Rather, they are worse off than their generation elsewhere in Africa, according to the Youth Development Index. It comes as no surprise that many opt to leave for Europe. In 2016 alone, at least 12,000 Ivorians arrived in Italy.

Few have the right to asylum, but sending migrant youth back to Africa

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proves difficult. Governments in Africa are not inclined to collaborate on Europe’s migration policies. While in Ivory Coast recently, I was told, ‘Europe prompted the migration influx by disposing of Gaddafi, which caused chaos in Libya. Europe has preyed long enough on Africa’s resources. Aid and economic investments pale in comparison to illicit financial flows – mainly by Western multinationals skilfully circumventing their tax obligations.’ But what about their own weak leadership? It is easy to try and levy criticism towards Africa’s leaders, but they see the situation as: Europe does as it pleases in Africa and then points fingers.

High levels of remittances from Europe to Africa make it politically difficult for African governments to curb migration, which is often deemed ‘Europe’s problem’. Moreover, they are not keen on readmitting migrants illegally staying in Europe. When the EU offered Mali an attractive deal, its population attacked officials for betraying them.

In the meantime, Europe is growing impatient. Where is ‘our’ former influence? Let Africa guard its own borders. Do these – often old – rulers need cash and equipment? Let them have it! Under the radar, if need be, like in Libya. With this strategy, European politicians scored points and created a drastic drop in the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. But at great human cost, with African migrants even being submitted to alleged slave auctioning, as witnessed by CNN in Libya.

Meanwhile West Africa is heating up. In Senegal, Burkina Faso and Gambia, youth movements successfully pushed ageing rulers out of power. Young people have recognised their growing influence and their numbers are expected to swell to 400 million by 2050. The 2017 Ibrahim Index of African Governance warns African leaders on doubling down to maintain the status quo. They have repressed protests and cut off access to the internet. Now they want to further restrict young people’s freedom of movement. Why not use well-trained border guards and their high-tech equipment for this – meant to tackle migrant smugglers and terrorists. Young Africans fear this will be used against them. Meanwhile the European Union continues to put its faith in strong leaders.

Fortunately, we have the EU-African Union summit to focus on youth. Generous aid packages to create jobs for youth will be pledged. Entrepreneurship is the friendly theme for donors and aid organisations. But for the youth in Africa, there is little space to start or grow a business. The elderly feel their time hasn’t come yet, and ‘authorities’ want their cut of the profits. So, does aid make sense? As entrepreneurial as you are, what would you do with your loan or savings? Leave for Europe, of course! Millennials from Africa are impatient and have seen what the European continent offers – via Instagram.

The summit should not only discuss what helps youth, but also what undermines them. That has become our affair too. European politicians cannot afford to intervene as they like in Africa, and coerce rulers into following their agenda by buying them off. This allows those rulers to strengthen their power, stifle real economic growth, and repress youth even harder. Our well-intended aid to young entrepreneurs might not yield the desired results: their incentives to leave are stronger. And the number of youth in Africa is set to double.

If you want to get future-orientated African leaders on board who are willing to act in favour of youth, the EU should aim at a more equitable and open relationship with Africa. Wouldn’t it be great to jointly build a new generation of African entrepreneurs with EU investments in knowledge, technology and regional integration?

However, Europe continues to put its interests ahead of African countries. This bothers these future-oriented leaders: unfair trade, illicit financial flows from Africa, and security interventions in the interest of European countries. Our politicians will have to change their behaviour, if the EU wants to get these leaders on board. Until then, don’t let the Africa deals provide another incentive for youth to leave.
Migration will dominate the fifth summit between Africa and the European Union, which will be held in Abidjan on 29 and 30 November. But Europeans keep dictating the agenda, due to lack of political unity in the African Union.

Geert Laporte is Deputy Director of the European Centre for Development Policy Management and has been following the relationship between the European Union and Africa for 20 years.

He spoke to EURACTIV France's Cécile Barbière on the sidelines of the African Union – EU Summit in Abidjan.

The fifth summit between the European Union and the African Union will open in Abidjan and focus on youth. Is this really the top priority in the relations between the two continents?

This is a very important subject for both Europe and Africa, but it is above all a consensual subject, which does not bother any of the two blocs, Continued on Page 9
Unlike more sensitive subjects such as migration, economic development, security or the fight against terrorism. These issues are also on the agenda of the summit and will be discussed as well.

Politically, the most urgent issues will certainly be migration and security, on which Europe and Africa must find shared solutions. But these themes are obviously closely linked to the main issue of the future of youth. The African population will double by 2050. If young people do not have employment opportunities at home, this will turn into a European problem.

Today Europe sees migration as a threat and Africa as an opportunity. These are themes that will always be on the agenda.

Youth will be at the centre of discussions between Europe and Africa. How are young people from both continents associated?

There are many young people who would like to participate more in this political dialogue, but there are no opportunities for them to do so. African leadership is not ready to open the debate to youth and civil society. But there is also a responsibility on the part of Europe, which maintains a very state-wide mode of cooperation in its dialogue with Africa. Yet, in the texts, there are opportunities for increased participation and inclusion of civil society, but in practice, this does not happen.

The migration issue is a common issue, but the debate still seems to be led by the European Union more than by Africa ...

But the debate on migration is primarily led by Europe, which is under greater political pressure to act. As a result, the EU is taking a short-term approach to the migration issue through tools such as the Trust Fund for Africa.

This urgency is also pushing Europe to negotiate with dictatorships like Sudan. Belgium’s State Secretary for migration Theo Francken recently invited Sudanese officials to Belgium to help identify Sudanese migrants in Brussels parks.

The idea of cooperating with such a country is problematic. Europe is so obsessed with the short-term that it indirectly finances perverse regimes like Sudan’s. In the long run, the effects are likely to be disastrous.

Revelations about the existence of slave markets in Libya have strongly affected both sides of the Mediterranean. Can this give a new twist to the debate?

The subject will be addressed, but in this type of summit, troublesome questions are always put aside. This is not a solution: for the last 40 years, we find the same themes on the agenda.

Whether on the subject of migration or on others, the relations of the two blocks are not on an equal footing ...

There is a shared responsibility of Africa and Europe on the subject of the situation of migrants in Libya. These videos have been very emotional, and if both sides are ready to take responsibility and recognize the mistakes to move forward, there may be an opening. For this to happen, African leaders must not put all the blame on Europe and the closing of borders.

Some African leaders have already publicly denounced the fact that enslaved migrant auctions are taking place in Africa.

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The EU – Africa relationship is still one of dependency because it is still based on financial support from Europe to Africa, even if it is declining. Those who benefit from the European aid system want the system to continue. Asymmetry comes from the fact that we are always in a North-South relationship. To change this paradigm, we must get rid of the dependency.
As the EU-Africa Summit kicks off in Abidjan, expectations are high on both sides of the Mediterranean. French MEP Maurice Ponga, who sees the problems faced by the two continents as increasingly interlinked, calls for a joint reaction.

Maurice Ponga is the French MEP of the EPP (Les Républicains). He represents the Pacific section of the French overseas constituency in the European Parliament and is the vice-chair of the commission dedicated to development.

Your “EU-Africa: a boost to development” report was voted by a large majority in a plenary session in the European Parliament in preparation for the EU-African Union summit in Abidjan. Could you summarise the report?

The world is changing and the challenges facing the African continent and facing the European continent are almost the same. The report prepares the summit in Abidjan based on five points: the challenges of economic development, security and terrorism, human development, migration and mobility, and finally the environment and climate change.

These challenges concern Africa and the European continent. Security, terrorism concerns Africa and it reflects on Europe. It must be approached in a comprehensive way, between the two continents. The text that has been voted by the European Parliament, therefore, represents the Parliament’s position for the Abidjan summit.

If Europe is so interested in Africa lately, it is because it suffers from the problems you mentioned: the migration crisis, terrorism. So we must suffer before deciding to act?

If Europe does nothing, and if Europe does not give a boost to Africa’s development, there is no need to speculate: we will be invaded by this migratory flow. In my opinion,
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it is important for Europe to be able to share but not mentor because African countries want to be treated as equals with Europe. They recognize, of course, that Europe is their big neighbour.

**Europe is not the only geopolitical player. There is China.**

Yes, there is also China, but you know the values that China stands for, if there are any. While the values that Europe develops in these countries, whether in Africa or elsewhere, are the universal values of human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Do you think China prioritises any of these?

**There are African countries that prefer no interference in their internal affairs, that we do not look at whether they put journalists in prison, for example.**

In this case, it is a world in which I do not wish to live. But I come back to this accelerator of Europe. The report revolves around resilience, that is, the ability of states to resist crises and adapt. There is political resilience, therefore the rule of law, which is the fundamental point of our relationship. Environmental policy is also very important.

**And to avoid repeating Europe's mistakes. For example, do not invest in fossil fuels, when there are already technically feasible and inexpensive alternatives?**

Right. The report points out that Africa is a weak emitter of greenhouse gases, while it is the continent that suffers all the climate anomalies of the planet.

**There is also the problem of embezzlement as a result of bad governance, which deprives the continent of resources ...**

We have found that $50 billion is leaving Africa every year illegally. Resource management must become transparent. Tools must be put in place to control this tax evasion. The report says that the correction of this tax evasion must be the subject of international action. It's international, it's global, it's not just European, it's something that should be of concern for all leaders around the world.

**Will this report be the contribution of this institution to the Abidjan summit, as presented by President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani?**

Yes, Antonio Tajani will be there at the head of the Parliament delegation and it will be up to him to convey our messages.

**You are vice-president of the Parliamentary Committee for Development in the European Parliament. What are your next projects?**

I will tell you, I am elected to the Pacific constituency...

**From New Caledonia...**

Yes, and my next issue is the creation of a specific financial instrument for the overseas territories. You know that with Brexit there will be less money. This file will be my main goal before the end of my term.

**France is already taking care of its territories overseas, so what are you expecting from the EU?**

To put in place a much more flexible tool than the EDF [the European Development Fund], and maybe with a higher budget. But it will be a much more suitable instrument. Because the EDF is an instrument to fight against poverty, while overseas countries and territories are not in wealth, but not in poverty either. It is necessary to have a specific instrument adapted to these overseas countries and territories.

**What is your experience as a member of parliament, do you feel that your colleagues from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are less interested?**

No, not at all, I consider that my colleagues in the East have quite the same attitudes, they are very interested and very active.

**Why is it relatively easy to cut development when the European Union has budgetary problems?**

With the colleagues of the parliamentary committee for development, we have argued against the idea of touching development aid. If we touch on development aid, the topics we discussed will spill over. We have to make sure that people from the African continent stay at home, find work at home.

**What are your relations with the European Commission?**

With Neven Mimica [Development Commissioner] and Stefano Manservisi [Director General DEVCO] we work very well together. They tell us that they are very happy to come to our committee, where we share a lot of the same positions.
The issue of forced returns of migrants, as well as sexual rights, is blocking the publication of the conclusions of the EU-Africa summit, one week after the end of the debates in Abidjan.

Unity between the European Union and the African Union is already under severe strain, one week after the end of the joint summit, as the official conclusions have still not been published.

Dedicated to the future of youth, the summit focused mainly on the migration crisis, in the wake of the dissemination of reports on the slave trade in Libya, which scandalised international public opinion and drew strong reactions from leaders on both sides of the Mediterranean.

The issue of repatriation of migrants stranded in Libya was tackled by the leaders, who announced they would rapidly implement a return strategy for migrants, starting with the evacuation of a camp of 3,800 migrants stranded in Tripoli, announced the Chair of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat.

However, since then, the question of these returns has blocked the summit’s common conclusions. At a meeting of the permanent representatives of the EU member states in Brussels on Wednesday (6 December), the lack of publication was deplored.

**VOLUNTARY OR FORCED?**

“The statement is still in the hands of the African Union. We hope for their confirmation as soon as possible on the final text,” a European source

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told EURACTIV France. Concretely, the sticking point is the question of forced returns.

“Europeans don’t appreciate the term voluntary,” according to a source at the African Union, “Every day we promise a resolution, it’s a joke, frankly.

The European Union wishes to see the question of returns mentioned in the conclusion. The African Union intends to mention specifically limiting the issue to voluntary returns only.

“Paragraph 73 on the voluntary return of migrants is the most important. It’s a matter of human rights, we can not force people to go back to countries where they will not be safe,” Ebba Kalondo, spokesman for Moussa Faki Mahamat, told EURACTIV.

“We are refining the text of the statement, it’s a matter of language,” she added. “I think the publication time is quite normal, it takes time to make those decisions.”

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Another pitfall is that of health and sexual and reproductive rights. This would be the first time they are included in a joint statement after an EU-Africa summit, according to a source at the EU. The conclusions of the last summit in 2014 carefully ignored the issue.

This time, the European Union is trying harder. Yet, on the African Union side, sexual and reproductive health and rights are not a point of discussion. “The issue of the mention of sexual and reproductive rights was rejected by African ministers at the summit,” a source at the AU said.

Sexual and reproductive rights have often been carefully avoided, since they include the issue of abortion, still very divisive in many European countries, but also in Africa. Illegal abortions in developing countries are one of the most common causes of maternal mortality.