

# A progressive policy towards Africa – African countries as global partners

---

## Why a position paper on German policy towards Africa?

**Global challenges such as refugee flows, migration and population trends, crises, terrorism and climate change can, in the long term, only be solved in cooperation with Africa. The continent is also gaining in global significance in economic terms, and its elites want to and must be involved. This development presents an opportunity for German policy towards Africa, which is based on global partnership and has a multilateral and European dimension. To date, German policy has not made the most of this opportunity. There is a need for clear priorities, concrete steps towards implementation and coherent action.**

Below, we set out priorities for a progressive German policy towards Africa for the timeframe of the next five years. Our approach should be seen as fleshing out and evolving the Federal Government Policy Guidelines for Africa of 2014 from a social democratic perspective – with the aim of achieving a progressive policy towards Africa which regards African countries as partners in international politics and acts accordingly.

The current migration and refugee crisis is, despite all the problems involved, an opportunity for German policy towards Africa in two respects. Firstly, it makes clear that we are living in a global context: crises and social and political marginalisation in other regions have concrete effects in and on Germany and Europe, unfair trade relations dominated by the North come at a cost. However, the response to the current crisis cannot be found solely in the credo of “tackling the causes of refugee flows”, which narrows down all action to achieving a short-term reduction in these flows. Refugee and migrant flows must instead be seen as an important cross-cutting issue in all of the relevant policy fields. Secondly, the current crisis offers an opportunity to normalise relations with the African continent, i.e. to reflect on where Germany or Europe take action out of solidarity or in pursuit of our own interests, and to undertake a rigorous review of the effects, limits and possibilities of our actions in relation to Africa.

Despite significant successes with regard to poverty reduction, the number of people living in absolute poverty is increasing as a result of strong population growth. In more than half of African countries, social inequality is on the rise. In addition, it can be expected that a quarter of African countries will be facing crises and conflicts in future and/or will be highly prone to crises. We are therefore formulating, also out of solidarity, a policy towards Africa which is designed to promote the continent’s sustainable development. Germany’s extraterritorial obligations, together with the social democratic movement’s moral and historical mission, provide a normative and legal framework for the realisation of human rights in third countries. At the latest since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) it enshrines, solidarity always also has a level of action in Germany. Our actions must be directed towards achieving the SDGs and, beyond that, our development cooperation must have a long-term and more multilateral focus, clearly pursue a justice-based and human-rights-based approach, and aim to achieve a high level of effectiveness.

The international perception of Europe has changed as a result of global geopolitical shifts and the crises within Europe in recent years. It is no longer self-evident to everyone that the “European model” is legitimate and right. Nonetheless, as a democratic continent, Europe

remains a key reference point for Africa's political transition. In the competition between authoritarian and participatory development models, we must proactively seek support for socially balanced and democratic development models, in line with our convictions and as part of a progressive policy towards Africa. This is both a necessity and an opportunity in foreign-policy terms.

### **A progressive policy towards Africa for a multifaceted continent**

In recent decades, Germany's policy towards Africa has primarily been shaped by international development cooperation. On the one hand, it is important to give development cooperation with Africa an up-to-date framework (one which is focused on the SDGs, multilateral and European). On the other hand, it is politically long overdue to establish a well-balanced coherence between foreign, defence and development policies in Germany as well as at European level. An approach based on global partnership requires political engagement and should not address problems solely through capacity building or financing.

In formulating a progressive policy towards Africa, the same fundamental questions arise as is always the case for German foreign policy: is the policy based on values and guided by primary interests? And what are its priorities? The conservative approach of promoting economic development and crises management is not wrong, but it completely neglects the need for globally relevant cooperation with Africa, and furthermore it disregards the idea of solidarity altogether. That is why it is necessary to formulate key points for a progressive policy towards Africa.

An approach based on global partnership leaves behind the former labels "continent of opportunities" and "continent of crisis". It instead reflects the aspiration of Africa's emerging and economically dynamic countries, in particular, to actively participate in shaping global developments, and combines this with the common interest of jointly protecting and guaranteeing global public goods, such as climate stability, natural resources, peace and health.

Formulating a *single* policy towards Africa, in the sense of a uniform approach to this large and heterogeneous continent, would not be the right way forward. Armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, economic upturns, absolute poverty and upward mobility can be found in such close proximity that a single policy for Africa is impossible. Diverse societal and political changes on the African continent must be understood as very different transformation processes. Nonetheless, there are overarching trends which apply to many African countries: high population growth, the emergence and growth of new middle classes, a widening divide between rich and poor, massive urbanisation, and the overexploitation of natural resources due to unsustainable economic models.

One obvious option would be to group the priorities for political action by categories of country: crisis countries and fragile states, the strongest economies such as South Africa or Nigeria, middle income countries, the weakest and poorest countries with limited development prospects, democracies, or countries with authoritarian governments. Caution should be shown here, however: a country such as Nigeria, for example, fits into multiple categories, as Africa's largest economy is also characterised by civil war and terrorism. Crisis-stricken Mali was, until recently, seen as a success in terms of stability and development, for example. Given the continent's heterogeneous nature, it is necessary to take differential approaches to individual countries. This requires traditional ways of thinking and prejudices to be overcome

by well-founded economic, social and political analyses. in order to overcome traditional thinking and prejudices.

Our objective thus is to understand Africa in terms of its regional contexts and to let these guide German and European actions. Migration, climate change, the destruction of natural resources and crises do not stop at national borders; in Africa, too, they are regarded as regional issues. In practice, German and European action is largely focused on individual countries. The complementary focus on the African Union and regional organisations, i.e. on institutions and capacity building, no longer adequately addresses the lack of regional approaches. Instead, we want to emphasise the regional dimension of challenges such as migration patterns or regional conflict patterns, and take this into greater account in our approach to state and civil-society actors and in the development of options for political action.

Even if, from a European perspective, different issues (such as migration) are in the foreground for North Africa than for Sub-Saharan Africa, the continent forms a unit, despite its heterogeneous nature – and the African Union is not alone in taking this view. A progressive policy towards Africa takes regional contexts into consideration, but recognises the continent as a whole in all its diversity.

### Who are our partners?

A progressive policy towards Africa requires progressive partners. These include both state and non-state actors. To drive forward societal, economic and political developments, cooperation with civil-society partners, trade unions and religious communities is just as necessary as dialogue and cooperation with political elites. This applies both to cooperation in and with individual countries and to partnership-based cooperation in the global framework. Consistent consideration of gender equality at all levels is a hallmark of a progressive policy towards Africa.

## Five priorities of a progressive policy towards Africa

**A progressive policy towards Africa has clear political priorities: Africa's involvement in global contexts in a spirit of partnership, engagement for peace, a fair economic partnership, and fight against social injustice. Much of the population is excluded from participating in the life of the community due to armed conflicts or the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Upward mobility through education is not enough on its own.**

### Priority 1: African states as global partners

As set out above, cooperation with African states is essential in view of the interconnected global nature of the causes of and solutions to common global challenges, from climate change to terrorism. Only together can we protect and guarantee global public goods. A progressive policy towards Africa therefore stands for Africa's participation in global contexts on equal terms, i.e. the policy is anchored in a multilateral and European framework.

A partnership-based policy towards Africa takes into consideration, in all policy fields, not only action in Africa, in particular the African Union's Agenda 2063, but also action in Europe. The SDGs represent a paradigm shift in this respect, as they apply to all countries. In other words, they affect German policy-making, too, in relation to both internal and foreign affairs. Besides cooperating with African countries on the SDGs, Germany must draw up a binding national implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda.

Europe and Germany are competing with other international actors in Africa, such as China or Turkey, which represent divergent interests in key policy fields. To achieve democratic and sustainable development, it is therefore necessary to intensify the political dialogue with these influential actors in Africa and to explore the scope for action – for example, to promote the development of the rule of law in African countries. At the same time, Europe only has a rudimentary common policy towards Africa. Germany must play a stronger and more active role in shaping relations between Africa and Europe.

This competition already raises the question of what forms of cooperation Germany can offer Africa's economically dynamic and emerging countries. Germany's policy towards Africa should focus not only on South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Egypt, but also on other emerging and dynamic countries such as Ghana or Tanzania, for example. We are calling for the development of a cooperative approach to these countries, one which is not only based on fair economic cooperation, but which also supports their involvement on equal terms in global governance structures and the international financial and economic institutions.

The United Nations (UN) regards Africa's development as one of the mayor global tasks. . Relations with African citizens and states also have a historical dimension: given Europe's colonial history, Africa's development is an important responsibility and joint task. That is another reason why it is important for Africa to be incorporated to a greater extent, and on equal terms, in global governance structures; at the same time, this must go hand in hand with support, recognition and calls for ownership and autonomous action.

We are therefore calling for special and differential treatment for African countries in cooperation and economic agreements, in order to reflect their different needs and development strategies. In addition to supporting a strengthening of African countries' position in the decision-making processes of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, we should, in particular, support the existing global bodies in which African countries are represented on equal terms with all other countries. This aspiration must be advanced jointly in the various global governance structures.

## **Priority 2: Peace and security: Peace Policy instead of boosting military intervention capabilities**

Crisis prevention and conflict management using political and civilian means are at the forefront of our actions in the field of peace and security policy. Our actions in this area must not be focused on military cooperation in the sense of building and financing the African community's military intervention capabilities. In general, sustainable conflict transformation requires the integration of a gender perspective; the efficient implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is of particular relevance.

80 per cent of international peace operations take place in Africa. Within the framework of the Africa-EU Partnership and multilateral engagement (the UN), a structured dialogue must be held on the underlying analyses, objectives, principles, outcomes and differences of African (the African Peace and Security Architecture, APSA) and international/multilateral conflict management.

It is not enough to finance both the African Peace and Security Architecture and UN operations in parallel, as this results in contradictions and questionable outcomes. Various security-policy institutions and approaches are being supported in parallel within Africa. This leads to a proliferation of security-policy approaches and forums. The aim must instead be a collective

security system which enshrines, in binding form, standards for cooperation and early intervention to prevent crises. Germany, as a UN contributor and a major supporter of the APSA, should seek to promote this dialogue.

The causes of crises and conflicts in Africa are diverse. Consequently, a range of different measures are needed, such as a strengthening of the global climate regime in view of droughts and water shortages caused by climate change, or international coordination and a strengthening of the rule of law to combat organised crime. Our understanding of crises must take into account overlapping causes of conflict in increasingly regional conflict systems. For example, maritime security affects trade routes and thus, invariably, regional and international interests. It is not enough to focus on individual – often fragile – countries. We must therefore increasingly work towards comprehensive crisis management.

In view of the current global upheavals and crises, support for stability is moving to the forefront of foreign- and development-policy action. It is essential, however, for peace and stability to be underpinned in the long term by opportunities for democratic participation and the rule of law.

German and European policy towards Africa should seek to ensure that the rule of law, in the sense of internationally recognised legal norms, is strengthened and enforced at national and supranational level. National and regional court decisions must be supplemented by concurrent and complementary international criminal jurisdiction. Those responsible for human rights violations must be held to account and resolute action must be taken to prosecute sexual violence against women, in particular.

The still high number of crises in Africa means that the need for humanitarian aid is rising. Humanitarian aid is based on the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It is vital for these principles to be defended, especially against the background of the erosion of international humanitarian law and the shrinking space for humanitarian actors in many places. Only by upholding these principles can it be ensured that access is possible even in the most difficult conditions and that effective humanitarian aid can be provided to the population concerned.

Despite the rising need around the world, the financing gap for humanitarian aid in 2016 was bigger than ever before. In Africa, in particular, crisis management has in many cases been severely underfunded in recent years, and there is a risk that this will remain the case for the “forgotten crises” in particular in the next few years. Humanitarian aid must be adequately financed and, together with short-term funding for emergency aid, be embedded in forward-looking, sustainable approaches to aid and cooperation. In addition, it is important to implement the right to health and education in the framework of the Agenda for Sustainable Development, including for those affected by humanitarian disasters, for example by developing adequate health care – both during acute crises and from a medium-term perspective.

### **Priority 3: Solidarity: Combating social inequality, promoting democratic participation and co-determination**

Together, social inclusion and opportunities for democratic, civic participation form the foundation for sustainable development. Although the trends in Africa are not uniform, taken as a whole they are problematic. In more than half of African countries, social inequality has increased in recent years. This is particularly problematic after more than a decade of dynamic,

albeit currently flagging, economic growth. Furthermore, in some countries development progress is being accompanied by unacceptable moves to restrict fundamental democratic rights and spaces for participation.

It is therefore important to work towards greater equal distribution by means of gender-sensitive development strategies and reforms of economic and social policy, as well as to support decent work and to promote prospects for young people.

Education and social security are of central importance for development and for action to combat social and political exclusion. Education and science are therefore key to African countries' economic strength, social and economic stability, and the advancement and development chances of entire regions and countries. German cultural and education policy abroad makes a valuable contribution to understanding and cooperation by facilitating linguistic access and scientific and cultural exchange.

Promoting gender equality, particularly by investing in education for girls and women, deserves special attention and support, as it has a particularly positive impact on social development.

Against the background of the debate on migration and refugees, it must again be underlined that social and political participation, participation in decision making and legal migration routes are the most effective ways of tackling the causes of refugee flows.

The younger generation not only needs employment prospects and living wages, but also corresponding opportunities for political participation. The key to demanding political responsibility is in the hands of young people, who make up a large majority of the population in all countries. Unless this section of the population is successfully convinced to engage with the political process, the demographic and economic trends will lead to a downward spiral of political abstinence, unemployment and radicalisation.

Also in the least developed countries, support for poverty reduction must go hand in hand with support for democratic participation. The promotion of democratic participation in these countries must not be limited to support for elections, i.e. support for a democracy which meets minimum procedural standards and complies with market requirements; instead, it must focus on respect for human rights – including for minorities – as well as press freedom and freedom of expression.

#### **Priority 4: Germany must become a pioneer for fair economic partnerships**

We are seeking to ensure that Germany becomes a pioneer as a fair trading partner for Africa and actively drives forward European arrangements in this context. This applies, in particular, to the design and implementation of Economic Partnership Agreements, which must be focused on the need for economic transformation and development, not just European trade interests.

The Economic Partnership Agreements must be designed in such a way as to promote development in the partner countries, contain adequate means to protect fledgling industrial and services sectors and the agricultural sector, and aim to achieve economic development benefiting ideally everyone in the country.

Our aim is to take effective action to combat illicit financial flows and close legal loopholes to drastically reduce counterproductive outflows from developing countries, while at the same time promoting fair tax systems. Germany, together with the EU, must support the African



Union's High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows and at the same time take effective action to combat the aggressive tax evasion strategies employed worldwide by European economic operators.

As a partner in trade and economic policy, Germany can play a role in the dialogue on sustainable development models with a high level of credibility. There is a huge need for consulting and dialogue on the question of the "right" industrial, energy and economic policies, the creation of value chains or the approach to the vast informal sector in African countries. Offers and opportunities for support can be created here, particularly for the emerging and dynamic economic areas in Africa. Renewable energies have an important role to play in this context, as they can combine economic development and climate protection in Africa.

Within the framework of foreign trade and investment promotion, greater consideration must be given to social and environmental criteria and human rights due diligence, especially with regard to export guarantees (including the programme to expand Germany's official "Hermes" export guarantee scheme in relation to Africa). We want to ensure the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights via a substantive national action plan produced by the Federal Government.

A progressive policy towards Africa seeks to ensure decent working conditions, living wages, trade union organizing rights in local and multinational companies, in the framework of value chains, and also in the informal sector. In value chains, Africa still frequently supplies the raw materials. Revenues from the mining of raw materials must be recorded transparently and primarily benefit local people. Economic and social self-determination is the fundamental prerequisite, in African countries and elsewhere, for democratic involvement and for people to participate in the future of their own country.

Africa is particularly affected by climate change, despite the fact that it accounts for a minimal proportion of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (almost none, excepting South Africa). It is also extremely vulnerable, as the climate and environmental changes affect societies with limited or no coping and adaptive capacities. Thus climate change is also an economic and social issue. Future development chances depend on the effective implementation of mitigation and adaptive strategies which are designed in a participatory manner and which must be tailored to the population's needs. Coherent resource policies which are environmentally and socially responsible must be an important aspect of cooperation with Africa.

### **Priority 5: Actively helping to shape relations between Africa and Europe**

The Africa-EU Partnership: We are seeking to ensure that Germany, alongside other European actors, plays a greater role in the design of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) and Partnership. The substantive focus should be more on social and economic issues, without losing sight of subjects such as good governance. The Partnership is still overly focused on security at present. The dialogue is highly formalised, not very pragmatic, and talks are too infrequent. Our aim is for there to be more informal opportunities for discussion, including on critical subjects.

Refugees, migration and mobility: Although, as a result of the crisis in Syria and Iraq, fewer migrants and refugees are currently coming to Europe from Africa in relative terms, we are seeking to ensure that the dialogue with our African partners is maintained and intensified, and that this takes place within the Africa-EU Partnership's Migration and Mobility Dialogue (MMD), which was created for this purpose, rather than via the Rabat and Khartoum processes. We

are highly critical of the European shift towards authoritarian regimes and of the dominant security-policy approach, including close cooperation with the security authorities in these countries. There is a danger that, in the medium term, these strategies could instead boost and reinforce the causes of refugee flows.

The current credo of tackling the causes of refugee flows and the focus on border security arrangements must be accompanied, in particular, by an intensification and utilisation of the potential of European Mobility Partnerships with African countries.

### Steps towards implementation

**Our policy towards Africa must not consist solely of significant political objectives; it must also set out concrete steps towards implementation which are to be carried out within a specified period of time. In this context, it is essential to ensure the coherence of Germany's policy towards Africa across ministerial lines and to involve Parliament and non-state actors. Potential steps include, for example:**

The development of interministerial priority strategies relating to the German Policy Guidelines for Africa, with the involvement of civil society and Parliament. An Africa Forum (Parliament, ministries, trade unions, NGOs) in the new electoral term should provide opportunities for discussion and involvement. The priority strategies should, in the spirit of the SDGs, always take into consideration the scope for action to be taken in Germany.

We are calling for the Federal Government to produce a biennial report on the implementation of German policy towards Africa on the basis of the Policy Guidelines for Africa of 2014. In particular, this should look at active German participation in shaping the partnership between Europe and Africa, as well as interministerial coordination and the involvement of Parliament and civil society.

The process of setting priorities in German policy towards Africa must be accompanied by intensive public outreach, in order to increase understanding of the need for partnership-based engagement with state and non-state actors in Africa and to seek support for this. In view of the problems concerning refugee flows and migration, proactive public outreach is of particular importance.

Especially with regard to relations with the economically dynamic and emerging countries, we are calling for the development of a strategy which, rather than being limited to more intensive economic cooperation, also provides concrete support for involvement in global governance structures, e.g. African representation on the UN Security Council and greater involvement in the international financial institutions. Rather than an extension of club governance in Africa's favour, support should be provided in particular to the existing global bodies in which African countries are represented on equal terms with all other countries, e.g. the Financing for Development Forum. This aspiration should be advanced jointly in the various global governance structures.

In our view, Germany must actively participate in and help to shape the dialogue on the post-Cotonou framework. The foundations for the way ahead after the Cotonou Agreement expires must be laid in cooperation with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group. It would seem sensible for key elements to be transferred to the Africa-EU Partnership, to simultaneously make it more dynamic.



German and European measures to deal with the refugee and migration crisis, in particular the implementation of the European Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, must be monitored by Parliament and civil society. To this end, the necessary German and African civil-society participation in the dialogue between Europe and Africa must be ensured, as must support for joint parliamentary communication forums.

Germany should participate actively in the Human Rights Dialogues in the EU and the African Union and work towards the efficient application and further development of the EU's instruments to protect human rights defenders, including via its own missions abroad. Maintaining space for action by dedicated activists, such as critical journalists or representatives of marginalised groups, plays a decisive role in the protection and promotion of human rights at local level.

Greater priority should be given to the field of crisis prevention, and in particular civilian approaches, with new proposals, adequate resources, and due consideration for UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

The development of new guidelines on crisis-management and peacebuilding , with the involvement of relevant civil-society actors, should be implemented rapidly, and the conceptual approach should be given verifiable objectives. Steps must be taken to increase state and non-state actors' analytical capacities with regard to conflict contexts, taking into consideration the perspectives of those affected by the conflict and local civil-society actors.

We are continuing to call for the achievement of the development-policy target for Germany's official development assistance (ODA) to account for at least 0.7 per cent of German gross national income, with Africa receiving at least half of the funds. With regard to the new, misleading possibility of counting the costs of support provided to refugees within Germany towards the ODA target, we are calling for separate figures to be listed for this in future.

German development cooperation must consistently pursue a human-rights-based approach. In this context, it must be possible for people and organisations in the African partner countries to lodge a complaint if they believe their human rights are being violated by projects and programmes run by implementing organisations, and it must be ensured that the process for doing so is made more transparent and more widely known.