



Africa-EU partnership of equals: how can we get there? Is the Global Gateway fit for purpose?

European Parliament, Brussels

7 March 2023

Dear friends,

On behalf of the religious and faith-based organisations involved in the preparation of today's event, I would like to **thank our hosts in the European Parliament** for providing a space for dialogue and exchange of perspectives on this important issue which is of shared concern to us: **how to make the Africa-EU partnership a partnership of equals?** And in particular, how the recently launched **EU Global Gateway initiative** can better contribute to this objective.

At the 6th AU-EU Summit held almost exactly a year ago in Brussels, the political leaders of the two regions announced an Africa-Europe Investment Package worth 150 billion euros that should be delivered through the Global Gateway – **the EU's new connectivity strategy** aiming at creating smart, sustainable and secure links and promoting investments in areas such as green & digital transition, energy, transport as well as education and health. This initiative is supposed to mark yet another step in the EU's recent efforts to move away **from a “donor-recipient relationship”** towards the model of a **fair partnership of equals**.

Why is this a topic of concern? And why to religious and faith-based organisations?

Churches and faith-based actors are **deeply rooted in local communities**. They share and live the **values** of trust, human dignity, human rights and sustainable development – values that should also underpin the Global Gateway if it is to become “a positive offer” to the EU’s partner countries.

In preparation for today’s event, we held a **series of dialogues among European and African faith communities** and the broader civil society to discuss how – acknowledging the legacy of historical power imbalances and injustices – Europe and Africa could cooperate on an equal footing for the benefit of their people, reaching even the furthest behind.

In one of our latest exchanges, looking in particular at the EU’s increased reliance on the private sector in its relations with Africa, several representatives of local communities asked **pertinent questions** regarding the governance structure of the Global Gateway, its main objective, transparency as well as the space given to partner countries and civil society in shaping the investment priorities and their implementation.

Against this background, we would like today’s discussion to help bring us a step forward. Our **objective is to have an open, frank and constructive conversation** that brings together different perspectives and helps us to address together – as policy-makers, religious and faith-based actors as well as broader civil society from Europe and Africa - the questions that the Global Gateway sooner or later will have to deal with.

Will it promote a connectivity of competition, or a connectivity of care and community? Will it prioritise business interests at the expense of human rights and environmental protection, or will it duly reflect local

communities' needs and promote an economy that serves people and planet? Which production, consumption and development models will it support?

One of the key insights from our previous exchanges was the **need for a fundamental change to more just, inclusive and sustainable economic, trade and local food systems**. Such change also requires shifting from an industrial and extractive model towards a more local, just and sustainable one, grounded on agroecology that enables African small-scale farmers to become vibrant and sovereign actors of a food system that is resilient to climate changes and other global instabilities such as the recent food crisis brought about the war in Ukraine. We want to invite panelists and participants of our meeting today to explore and re-imagine the Global Gateway, so it may contribute to this shift by being coherent with the objective of **locally-led sustainable human development** and providing a genuine contribution to a **partnership of equals between Africa and Europe**.