**For a partnership that brings justice for the African people**
**Joint statement in view of the 7th AU-EU summit**

10 November 2025

In this Jubilee Year 2025 – a special year of forgiveness and reconciliation that the Catholic Church celebrates every 25 years – and as we soon begin the African Union's decade of reparations, we welcome the 7th AU-EU summit as an opportunity to work together on the building blocks of an equitable partnership between the two regions.

Speaking from the direct experiences of our communities and people we serve, among them those experiencing poverty and hunger, farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, women and youth, we take this occasion to advocate for a fair and responsible AU-EU partnership. We reaffirm our commitment to social, environmental and global justice, while denouncing false climate solutions, a development model based on extractivism and the commodification of nature.

We urge the leaders gathered in Luanda to place the dignity of our peoples at the heart of AU-EU relations. This requires decisive choices across various fields. We recognise the efforts of many EU initiatives to help advance human development. At the same time, however, as we witness that several of these initiatives seem to replicate extractive patterns of the past, we share our concerns regarding the EU's increased focus on its geopolitical and economic interests, at the expense of justice and solidarity with African people, of their needs and of their aspirations. Taking this path would not lead to a true partnership, one that seeks to address existing imbalances and is oriented towards genuine mutual benefit.

In this statement, we therefore particularly wish to address some key challenges we see in the areas of energy and climate partnerships, Global Gateway, food systems and debt, and to offer perspectives on how joint action on these areas may better serve the objective of integral human development.

## From extractivist energy deals to fair partnerships and democratic energy systems

The race for critical raw materials (CRM) is devastating territories, sacrificing communities, and it risks reinforcing historical patterns of extractivism. It is taking place within systems that put profit above people and that treat land, water, and minerals – the foundations of life on Earth – as commodities for foreign profit rather than as common goods to be stewarded with care and for the benefit of all.

In this context, African countries are seeking to break with historic patterns of extraction and commodity dependence, to keep more of the processing of their own resources on their soil and to unlock more domestic value addition. **This requires a different industrial partnership between European and African countries, in which Europe does not turn to an overly protectionist "Europe first" approach.** Such an approach would undermine the potential of strengthening ties between both regions, weaken the EU's trade relations at a critical juncture, go against Africa's local beneficiation objectives and the realisation of her true potential, and erode global climate and environmental goals. **European policymakers must recognise that the EU's own supply chain security agenda cannot be achieved through domestic processing alone, and that true**

**partnership with African countries can only be built if it is aligned with Africa's value addition ambitions.**

In general, the EU's cooperation with African countries on critical raw materials (CRM) is taking place under non-binding frameworks, such as the Global Gateway investment package, Strategic Partnerships under the Critical Raw Materials Act, and Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships. It is also influenced by the EU's Free Trade Agreements, which include legally binding provisions that often leave little room for partner countries to maintain control over their mineral resources. To be better partners, **the EU and European governments must translate the EU's declared support for local value addition in African countries into tangible action**. This includes agreeing on a clear common definition of "value addition", establishing specific and binding technical and financial assistance commitments on the sharing of knowledge, technology and skills, and using robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

For Europe-Africa partnerships to foster equitable, responsible and sustainable mineral resource management, it is also essential to reconsider the overall model of energy production, and to ensure that benefits associated with renewable energy and mineral production, such as revenue and jobs, are felt by local communities and producer countries.

Renewable energy megaprojects, often imposed without properly consulting local populations, concentrate economic power, lack transparency and destroy ecosystems. Instead, **bi-regional relations should promote democratic, decentralised renewable energy systems, with community management and rooted in local territories**. The AU-EU partnership can do so by (1) strengthening public involvement in funding, ownership and control of renewable energy projects, (2) focusing on small-scale projects that target those furthest behind, (3) supporting the cooperative and social economy (such as renewable energy communities), (4) upholding Indigenous Peoples' rights and knowledge, (5) enhancing monitoring and enforcement capabilities regarding social and environmental standards, and (6) designing projects for domestic and regional markets, not solely for export.

### From industrial food production to agroecology

Hunger is not a production problem, it is a justice issue, related to the sharing of resources and financial access. Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity persist in Africa today largely due to the logic and priorities of a development model that is designed to maximise economic growth. Industrial agriculture, marked by monoculture, large-scale production and the use of advanced technologies, chemical inputs, genetically modified or hybrid seeds and synthetic fertilisers, focuses on increasing food production to maximise economic returns, favouring profit accumulation by big agribusiness. It contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, water and air pollution, biodiversity loss and soil degradation. It shifts away from traditional, diversified diets and impacts on human health. It enables the concentration and abuse of power by large-scale agribusiness and sidelines smallholder farmers from decision-making. It disregards ancestral and embodied knowledge and diverse local experiences, worldviews and traditions, and undermines the food and seed sovereignty and self-determination of local communities.

The AU-EU partnership must support a transformation of agriculture that breaks free from this exploitative and extractive way of farming and from the dependency on imported fertilisers, chemical inputs, and genetically modified seeds. This includes promoting agroecology – a tested and proven model for climate resilience among rural communities – which the EU could help to do by **establishing clear, binding EU guidelines and directing financing channels towards support for agroecology**.

It also includes protecting and promoting farmer-managed seed systems that enable the preservation of traditional crop species, the development of local varieties adapted to farmers' specific needs, the self-sufficiency of farmers and environmental stewardship. These systems are rooted in knowledge, values and wisdom built up over thousands of years and provide a strong basis for people to respond to their own needs for healthy, culturally-adapted foods. Criminalising farmers for saving and exchanging seeds or imposing rigid intellectual property regimes or corporate agendas violates both their rights and the planet's needs.

This transformation further requires policy coherence and an end to double standards. Pesticides that are prohibited to be used in European agriculture because of the harm they cause to people's health or the environment should no longer be produced for export to outside the EU, including Africa.

**We urge leaders gathered in Luanda to shift the focus from production, efficiency and profit, and to work together on an agricultural model organised to address matters of justice, foster equitable resource distribution and protect our ecosystems**.

From excessive consumption to joyful sobriety

Switching to renewable sources of energy, increasing energy efficiency and investing in agroecology have an important role to play, but this is not enough. Alignment with planetary boundaries requires ambitious energy sufficiency policies.

Recent EU energy and climate partnerships with African countries have been designed based on minerals demand predictions that assume a significant increase in energy consumption in Europe. They lack serious efforts to address excessive consumption in Europe, which would be essential to reduce the social and environmental pressure on resource-rich countries and to care for our common home. Europeans must recognise that, past a certain level, greater material consumption is not linked with an improvement in wellbeing, and that they can no longer sustain an economic model that exploits people and resources without limit. The AU-EU partnership must be based on the recognition of the ecological limits of the planet and place care for life in all its forms at its centre.

**We urge European leaders to recognise their historical responsibility for the transgression of planetary boundaries and to adopt policies aimed at demand production and consumption reduction**, which would lower the EU's over-reliance on imported energy more rapidly – increasing its resilience to potential shocks – and prevent further social and environmental impacts on African territories. This includes **scaling down ecologically destructive industries in Europe and establishing binding EU material footprint reduction targets**. These are necessary, concrete steps to guarantee what is necessary for a dignified life for Europeans, for Africans, for all.

From debt trap to debt justice

The current debt crisis is the worst in history, affecting over 40 African countries. Many are spending more than 20% or even 30% of government income on foreign debt service, facing the impossible choice between paying interest on unsustainable debts and investing on education, health and climate action. This also pushes export-oriented African countries to intensify extraction and the export of natural resources to fulfil debt repayment obligations (in USD), instead of organising their economy based on domestic consumption needs, democratic decision-making, self-determination and care for the environment.

The present crisis did not arise by coincidence or solely from domestic factors. Many countries in Africa inherited debt accumulated by their colonial authorities, and many former colonies were forced to pay compensation to former European rulers for the loss of income resulting from the liberation of enslaved people. In the absence of an international democratic governance of debt, the process of taking on new loans or renegotiating existing debts has happened on highly unfavourable terms for African countries, with creditors holding too much power, and negotiations being carried out without transparency, standard rules or sufficient civil society involvement. Excessive borrowing costs have been heavily influenced by the credit industry, dominated by powerful Western credit rating agencies. The G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments has failed to deliver the expected results, being slow, creditor-driven and not fit for purpose.

In the face of this model that concentrates income and increases poverty, we urge African leaders to no longer accept debt that is one sided and debt workout mechanisms that are not meant to free African societies. We urge European governments to recognise that much of the debt that has been accumulated is illegitimate, unjust and unsustainable.

Europe has a responsibility to support Debt Relief Initiatives. **We urge the leaders at the summit to take seriously the calls for urgent debt restructuring as well as debt cancellation, to be implemented without economic policy conditions**. The success of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative showed that debt can indeed be cancelled, and debt cancellation must not be a means to encroach on the economic sovereignty of countries overburdened by unfair and unsustainable debt conditions. Further, leaders should support the establishment of an **African Credit Rating Agency** to overcome the current oligopoly of credit rating agencies and support reforms of international financial market and banking regulation that disadvantage the countries of the global south.

We also echo major recent reports on debt – Jubilee Debt Report, the Cape Town Declaration of the African Leaders Debt Relief Initiative, the Lomé Declaration of the AU – which bring an unequivocal call for systemic reforms of the international finance architecture. In this Jubilee Year, **it is our hope that European leaders will follow up on the outcome of the 4th Financing for Development Conference and support the AU's call for the establishment of a debt resolution mechanism at the UN level**. Such a mechanism would provide a space for democratic deliberation about the rules governing borrowing and lending and to compel all creditors (public, multilateral, and private) to come together and accept binding conditions that favor sustainable development.

Ending the debt trap is not about generosity, it is about justice and true partnership, and about making a strategic choice to invest in global stability.

## From EU-centric investment strategies to people-centered development

Breaking with historical patterns of extraction and unsustainable debt also requires revising the Global Gateway model. The Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, though in principle, was designed to strengthen partnership with Africa and accelerate her Agenda 2063, has remained largely EU-driven, with priorities designed in Brussels and projects reflecting Europe's strategic interests in securing critical raw materials, energy imports, and migration control, rather than Africa's developmental agenda.

The Global Gateway was designed to help "create market opportunities" for European businesses, provides funding mainly through loans, and lacks robust mechanisms for transparency and civil society engagement and for publicly accountable control of critical infrastructure. Such a model contradicts the EU's "development cooperation" primary purpose of eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities and is at odds with EU Treaties and the EU's external budget Regulation. It risks diverting scarce public resources from poverty and inequalities reduction in places and countries that need them the most and in sectors such as health, education and social protection.

What we need instead is a model rooted in sovereignty, self-sufficiency, transparency and local leadership and value addition. In practice, this means **public-public partnership projects, grants-based finance, prioritisation of local companies, a legally-binding human rights and environmental framework, and an active role for local civil society in the selection, design, and implementation of all projects**.

In view of a partnership that brings justice for the African people

The 7th AU-EU summit, taking place in the AU's Year of Reparations, must offer reparations for historical injustices and exploitation inflicted on the African continent. Europeans must acknowledge the root causes of present issues, and that the legacy of colonialism and slavery continues to shape struggles of extractive economies and debt crises. Concrete steps from the EU's side regarding **local value-addition, democratic energy systems, promoting agroecological principles and practices, as well as debt resolution,** are all key to address the root causes of poverty and inequality in Africa – neither aid, nor investments with suffice – and they are all part of a process of addressing historical injustices. This is how European leaders can pave the way for a forward-looking relationship with African countries. This is how the AU-EU partnership can be at the service of life.

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