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"Africa-Europe relations: choose a specific aspect and explain, from your perspective, what the priorities should be to achieve a stronger partnership?"

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Europe and Africa have a very interesting relationship, and the two continents have been tied to each other in several ways since the dawn of modern history. The ties we're talking about aren't necessarily consensual or even wanted. Due to the African disadvantage that follows the colonialism era; Africa is still required to make more effort in order to catch up with the rest of the world. Europe on the other hand is ready to pave the way for a new era of Africa-Europe relation. Surely there are a lot of areas where the two continents can benefit from each other and for Africa to learn from the past experiences of Europe: governance, modernization, equality, health and most recently environmental consciousness. Choosing the best fitted area for partnerships can be very challenging, because even though Africa has problems that hinder its progression, it can't take blindly the policy recommendations proposed by the European initiatives due to the cultural, socio-economic and political differences between the two. As the world faces right now one of the most vicious epidemics of the human history, health is the reigning topic of international relations. However, I believe that a more imminent threat that cannot be overlooked is climate change. Climate change is the perfect aspect to prioritize in an African-European partnership.

Why climate change?

Last year, we saw wildfires breakthrough many countries, wildfires that follows no pattern: in France, Greece, Algeria and Turkey. In addition to the consistent heat waves, animal extinction, air pollution that turned into a serious health issue in India, food insecurity (especially in Africa) and many more. Climate change is tackled in more than one of the 17 SDGs and world leaders started taking measures in order to mitigate the consequences but are we doing enough?

Europe has given the issue a considerable amount of attention, with its most recent Green Deal, which aims to turn Europe into a green, resource-efficient continent with no net greenhouse gas emission by 2050, with an economic growth decoupled from resource use and leaving no person or place behind.¹ Furthermore, Europe was an active member at the UN climate change conferences (COP) as well as its endorsement of the Paris agreement. On a country level, France has taken a huge step toward an environmentally conscious future by banning all plastic packaging for fruits and vegetables.

Africa is showing great promise as well in that area, the African Union has set 2063 agenda that includes a call for prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. The agenda has set a plan to achieve that based on modern agriculture, blue/ocean economy and environmentally sustainable communities.² Africa is an active member at the UN climate change conferences (COP) too, it launched the African Adaptation initiative (AAI) in the

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

² <https://au.int/agenda2063/goals>

COP21, an initiative that aims to ensure the adaptation of the continent to the effects of climate change in the immediate, short, medium and long term³.

Why Africa?

There have been attempts by Europe to partnership with Africa over the climate change in the past, in a failed try to adopt the European Green deal on Africa. The reason behind that failure is not surprising; Europe was implementing measures that Africa neither has the endurance nor the resources to take. This failure is a reflection of Europe's incapacity of offering a textbook solution to this crisis because the African context is hugely different from the European one and a one way partnership will never work. There has to be collaboration, a shared perspective and middle ground where the two continents can meet and benefit from each other.

Why Europe?

The world owns Africa that, it's not surprising when we know that Africa is paying the price of countries' greed over the years since the industrial revolution. Africa is the least continent that contributed to the climate change crisis, and yet it's the continent that pays the most for the industrial countries' lack of contribution. Europe has shown impressive results and innovative ideas to curb the fervent threat. We're still keeping the 1.5 degrees of climate change, this number is however on a very thin ice, and we're impatiently waiting to see how the AU-EU summit will address the climate issue properly with a mutual effort and global benefit for the whole planet.

“At a time of crisis, the wise build bridges, the foolish build dams, the more bridges we build, the wiser we become.”

³ <https://africaadaptationinitiative.org/>