

[Factsheet: Political negotiations on a new ACP-EU Partnership to start today in New York](#)

The Cotonou Partnership Agreement is the legal framework ruling relations between the EU and 79 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP). It is one of the oldest and most comprehensive frameworks of cooperation between the EU and third countries. Signed in 2000 for a period of 20 years, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement unites more than one hundred countries (EU member states + 79 ACP countries) and represents over 1.5 billion people.

The EU-ACP partnership focuses on the eradication of poverty and inclusive sustainable development for ACP and EU countries. It is divided into three key action areas: development co-operation, political dialogue and trade.

→ [Cotonou Agreement](#) (available in all 24 EU languages)

Why does it need to be modernised and why is this important?

The world has changed considerably since the Cotonou Agreement was adopted almost two decades ago. Global and regional contexts (in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) have evolved significantly – and so have the common global challenges to be addressed and opportunities to be grasped. Thus, the core objectives of the partnership have to be reviewed to adapt to the new realities. The EU is therefore seeking a comprehensive political agreement, setting a modern agenda framed by the internationally agreed sustainable development roadmaps (the UN 2030 Agenda – SDGs, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the New Consensus on Development, etc). The coming months will be crucial as we are about to enter a new era in our relationship with ACP countries. The negotiations will pave the way to new dynamics and cooperation going beyond the traditional development dimension.

What are the potential benefits? How does a new era of EU-ACP relations could affect the people?

Building on the lessons learned during our 43 years of cooperation and making the most of the new context, the future agreement can bring unprecedented opportunities. By setting up a powerful political alliance, the EU and its partners will be in a position to develop solutions to the challenges faced in each region. These include growth and job creation, human development and peace, migration and security issues. Many of today's challenges of a global dimension require a concerted, multilateral approach, in order to achieve tangible results. As it was shown in 2015 with the setting up of a successful coalition that ultimately led to the conclusion of the Paris Agreement on climate change, the EU-ACP partnership has the power to provide valuable responses to global challenges. If we join forces, we can form a majority worldwide as the EU and ACP countries represent more than half of the UN

membership. Together, we can make a difference and set a global agenda in international fora. As stated in the negotiating directives, the EU's strategic priorities include:

- Accelerating progress towards the attainment of the goals of UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in all its dimensions;
- Advancing inclusive, sustainable and economic development;
- Building stronger states and societies (through peace, security, justice and fighting against terrorism);
- Supporting private sector development and enhancing regional integration;
- Promoting and ensuring respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, rule of law and good governance;
- Managing mobility and migration issues;
- Supporting the transition to low greenhouse gas emissions and developing climate resilient economies;
- Ensuring environmental sustainability and sustainable management of natural resources.

How to achieve these objectives? Through a new structure better adapted to each region's needs.

A new partnership can be a powerful tool to strengthen our relations with the countries as a group as well as with each "region" (namely Africa, the Caribbean & the Pacific) and focus on key tailored priorities. This will also allow the further development of our "continent to continent" relationship with Africa.

The proposed new structure consists of:

- a common foundation agreement (containing values & principles common to the EU and Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, and the overarching objectives) at EU-ACP level
- in combination with three strengthened regional partnerships (EU-Africa, EU-Caribbean, EU-Pacific), in the form of specific protocols. These three strong action-oriented pillars will allow for the relevant actors to participate in the negotiation, governance and implementation of the future partnership while respecting the principle of subsidiarity.

The flexible regional partnerships should be managed by the regions themselves, providing for an increased role of the relevant regional organisations in the establishment and management of the future regional partnerships..

What are the specific priorities proposed towards the African region?

The priorities proposed by the European Union for the EU Africa partnership are to focus on achieving peace and stability, managing migration and mobility, consolidating democracy and good governance, unleashing economic opportunities, reaching human development standards as well as addressing climate change. The proposal is fully in line with the outcome of the [African Union-European Union Summit](#) held in November 2017 in Abidjan.

What is the link between the New Africa Europe Alliance for sustainable Investment and Jobs announced by President Juncker on 12/09 and the future EU-ACP Partnership?

The future ACP-EU agreement will contribute to this [alliance](#) by strengthening our relations with both each African state and the continent as a whole, through the tailor-made African pillar. Increasing responsible investment in Africa, especially in sectors where the European Union has a value added, is among the key priorities. In the coming months, the EU and its African partners will discuss the way forward.

The new Africa Europe Alliance is thus not a stand-alone initiative. It is part of the wider set of strategic frameworks and a crucial element to deliver on the AU-EU Abidjan Summit Declaration. The Alliance seeks to promote a substantial increase of private investment from both, Europeans and Africans, help improve the business environment, boost trade and support education and skills.

What are the specific priorities proposed for the Caribbean region?

The key areas of cooperation for the regional partnership with the Caribbean include addressing climate change, vulnerability, citizen security, good governance, human rights, human development and social cohesion. Fostering inclusive growth, deepening regional integration and reducing natural disasters effects are also high on the agenda.

What are the specific priorities proposed for the EU-Pacific region?

The large number of island nations and their huge maritime territories make the Pacific countries an important player for the EU in tackling global challenges, particularly with respect to their vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. Other priorities should focus on maritime security, sustainable management of natural resources, good governance, human rights, especially gender equality, and inclusive sustainable growth.

Will regional organisations have a role in the post-2020 partnership?

The growth of regional bodies has been a significant trend since the 1990s. Across the ACP countries, numerous regional organisations have emerged and some have become key actors in international relations, with the African Union, the Pacific Islands Forum and Cariforum especially strengthening their respective role, as well as sub-regional organisations in Africa including amongst others ECOWAS and SADC. The EU and the ACP countries will continue to rely on a multi-level system of governance that allows taking action at the most appropriate level (national, regional, continental or ACP), in line with

the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity.

Will non-state actors have a role in the agreement?

The EU values structured dialogue and is in favor of a multi-stakeholder approach that includes non-state actors – private sector, civil society, and local authorities. These partners should be able to work in an enabling environment and have the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to national, regional and global decision making.

Observer status

The Agreement should include a provision establishing that third parties, which subscribe to the values and principles underpinning the Agreement and which have an added value in fostering the specific objectives and priorities of the Partnership, may be granted a status of observer.

Who is the EU's chief negotiator?

The EU chief negotiator is Commissioner Mimica who has also been leading the preparatory phase up until now.

Who will be negotiating on behalf of the ACP group of states?

The central negotiating group is composed of representatives from the three regions (Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) and is led by the **Hon. Robert Dussey**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of Togo.

Where will the negotiations take place?

In the EU and ACP countries.

How long should the negotiations last?

The Cotonou agreement is due to expire on 29 February 2020. Therefore, the new agreement needs to be both finalised and approved by then.

How long will the new agreement last?

It will be proposed that the future EU-ACP partnership would be concluded for an initial period of 20 years. Three years before its expiry, a process with a view to re-examining what provisions should govern the future relations should be initiated. Unless a decision on terminating or extending the agreement is taken by the Parties, the Agreement will be tacitly renewed for a maximum period of 5 years, until new provisions or adaptations have been agreed upon by all Parties. The Agreement should also include a “rendez-vous” clause for a comprehensive revision of the strategic priorities, after the expiration of the UN 2030 Agenda.

Are the negotiating directives public?

Yes. The EU negotiation directives are available [here](#).

For More Information

[Press release on the future EU-ACP partnership](#)