

## **Shaping Peace Together in the EU-Africa Partnership**

**On the occasion of International Day of Peace 2020, 21 September 2020**

On International Day of Peace, Caritas Africa and Caritas Europa call on EU and African leaders to adopt a new framework for EU-Africa relations that puts people at the heart of local peace and security efforts.

Concerned about the risk of a future partnership marked by top-down approaches, we urge leaders to be inspired by this year's International Day of Peace theme "Shaping Peace Together", and to make the upcoming 6<sup>th</sup> AU-EU Summit an opportunity to commit to practical ways of building peace through genuinely inclusive processes.

*"Putting people at the heart of peace and security efforts would entail going beyond a state-centric approach, acknowledging peoples' capacities, and formulating ambitious strategies for inclusivity in peace and resilience building."*

- Albert Mashika, Executive Secretary of Caritas Africa

The 6<sup>th</sup> AU-EU Summit at the end of October is expected to lead to a joint declaration laying down the priorities and concrete actions of the EU-Africa relations in the next few years, including in the fields of peace and security. Despite the EU's commitment to the 2030 Agenda principles and to creating a people-centred partnership, previous statements by EU institutions on their vision for this future partnership – such as the [proposal made by the European Commission \(EC\) and the European External Action Service \(EEAS\)](#) and the [Council Conclusions on Africa](#) – have consistently focused more on state security. EU-Africa relations should, however, be based on multi-stakeholder partnerships, involving civil society and other actors, not only governments or intergovernmental institutions. This is particularly relevant given that peacebuilding is a holistic process that requires addressing the root causes of conflict and investing in community-level conflict prevention and social cohesion. Peace building also requires important efforts towards the elimination of extreme poverty and the preservation of the rule of law.

We thus call on EU and African leaders to recognise the importance of local community engagement and the contribution of faith actors in peacebuilding efforts; to establish practical entry-points for grassroots and civil society actors, including women and youth, so they can participate meaningfully in peace initiatives; and to scale-up locally led funding, programming, and partnership opportunities.

*"Only with a bold commitment to shaping peace together will actions under the future EU-Africa partnership succeed in addressing security issues, such as limited social cohesion, and ultimately reduce conflict and instability that severely undermine development efforts in better rebuilding a post Covid-19 reality."*

- Maria Nyman, Secretary General of Caritas Europa

As Caritas, we advocate for grassroots participation not only because it is indispensable for the effectiveness of peace building strategies, but foremost because it is a clear option for recognising each person's dignity, for solidarity, for co-responsibility, and for the choice to work for the common good. As such, we envision and encourage the future EU-Africa partnership to benefit from the opportunity to put people at the centre of peace efforts by investing in community-driven initiatives.

## Note to the editor:

- The last AU-EU Summit occurred in 2017. The 6<sup>th</sup> AU-EU Summit is planned for 28-29 October 2020, when AU and EU leaders are expected to adopt a joint declaration which will serve as a guiding framework for their relations in the next few years. The declaration will complement the Sub-Saharan regional pillar of the new EU–African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) partnership agreement (or Post Cotonou Agreement), which is still under negotiation.
- In March 2020, the European Commission and the European External Action Service issued a [joint communication](#) outlining their proposal for a new comprehensive strategy with Africa. In June 2020, the Council of the EU adopted [conclusions on Africa](#), outlining the views of EU Member States for future EU-Africa relations.
- Caritas Europa as well as Carita Africa compose two of the seven regions of Caritas Internationalis, the global confederation of Caritas. Caritas Africa is the network of 46 Caritas organisations in 46 African countries. Caritas Africa member organisations are part of the local communities they serve, and focus on human development, peace building and economic justice, while practically responding to some of the world’s largest and most complex humanitarian emergencies. Caritas Europa is the network of 49 Caritas organisations in 46 European countries. More available at: [www.caritas.eu](http://www.caritas.eu)
- In May 2020, Caritas Europa and Caritas Africa published a joint [position paper](#), with [CIDSE](#)’s contribution.
- The [International Day of Peace](#) was established in 1981 by the United Nations. Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. This year, the theme is “Shaping Peace Together”.