

The Africa-EU Energy Partnership and Civil Society

The Joint Africa-EU Strategy agreed in 2007 defined eight areas for strategic partnership between Africa and Europe, including an Energy Partnership. With a shared vision and common policy, the Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP) aims to scale up investment in energy infrastructure, to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency and improve management of energy resources. The structures of the AEEP provide for the engagement of African and European civil society in the dialogue on energy under the Partnership. This includes participation in the meetings of the Joint Experts Group and the proposed Partnership Forum. To date European civil society organizations have had some opportunities to be involved, while engagement with African civil society has been almost entirely absent. However, the involvement of civil society in dialogue between Africa and Europe on energy issues is not yet routine, and civil society organizations, especially in Africa, will need to continue to advocate for their voices to be heard.

Background

The Joint Africa-EU Strategy agreed by African and European heads of government in December 2007 was envisaged as an approach to partnership between Africa and Europe that goes beyond development co-operation. The intention was to set relations between Africa and Europe on a new basis of common interests and to strengthen ties between the two continents. The Strategy defined eight areas for strategic partnership, one of them being Energy.

The Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP) was expected to build on existing dialogue between Europe and Africa on energy issues. Increased concerns about energy security, energy access and climate change reinforced the importance of links between the energy systems of Africa and Europe. Through the Partnership it was envisaged that Africa and Europe could work together to

develop a shared vision and common policy, as well as stimulate action to address the energy challenges of the 21st century. It aimed to scale up European and African investments in energy infrastructure, including promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency, and improving the management of energy resources. And it would also help to mainstream climate change into development cooperation.

Civil society engaged to varying degrees in the consultations that led to the JAES. This involvement continues through the European and African Civil Society Steering Groups for the Strategy, comprising civil society representatives (contact organizations) for each of the eight partnerships. The European Civil Society Steering Group is comprised of organizations who were active during the initial consultations. As a result the officially designated civil society European contact organization for the AEEP is Climate Action

Network Europe (CAN-E). For African civil society, the Steering Group is under the leadership of the African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).

The Africa-EU Energy Partnership

The purpose of the AEEP is to provide a long-term framework for structured political dialogue and cooperation on energy issues. The agreed objectives of the AEEP are:

- Effective Africa-EU dialogue on energy access and energy security for both continents;
- Improved access to reliable, secure, affordable, climate friendly and sustainable energy services for both continents; and
- Increased European and African investments in energy infrastructure in Africa, including promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Structure

Dialogue between the two partners is taking place at a number of different levels, overall and within in each of the eight areas of partnership. At the highest level is a Summit of political leaders, the next one to be held in Libya later in 2010 when the joint Strategy will be reviewed.

Joint Experts Group

A Joint Experts Group (JEG) is the key body for each of the eight partnerships under the Africa-EU Strategy. The JEG of the Energy Partnership has now met three times (Addis Ababa, October 2008; Brussels, June 2009;

Cairo, February 2010).

European and African civil society representatives are supposed to be invited to the JEG meetings of each partnership. In the case of the AEEP this has been limited and fairly haphazard, though reportedly better than for other partnership areas. In particular, opportunities for African civil society participation in the JEG have been lacking.

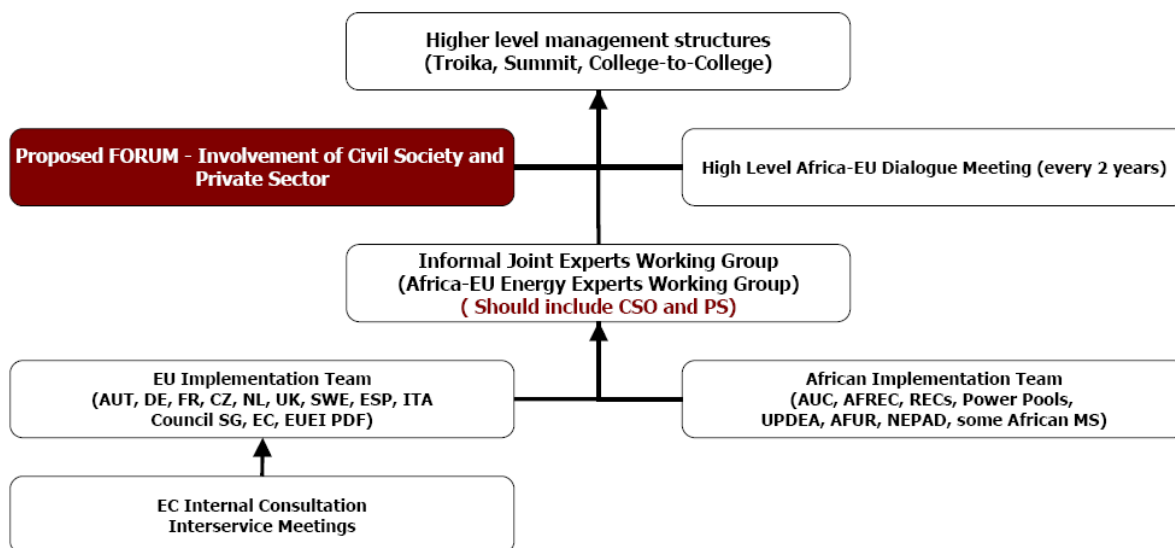
Implementing Teams

For each continental partner, Africa and Europe, an Implementation Team (IT) has been formed to help drive forward implementation of the AEEP. The European IT is composed largely of representatives from Member States, and co-ordinated jointly by Austria and Germany. The African Implementation Team, in effect, comes under the African Union Commission.

High Level Meeting

The first High Level meeting (i.e. Commissioner level) on the AEEP was held in Addis Ababa in September 2008. The EC and AUC agreed then that a High Level Dialogue Meeting should be held every two years. Though originally scheduled for the second half of 2009, the first of these meetings will be held in Vienna, 20-21 April 2010. The High Level meeting will discuss, amongst other things, some 'political targets' on energy access, energy security and renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Partnership Forum



The idea of the Africa-EU Energy Partnership Forum is to involve civil society, research institutes and the private sector on both continents in the dialogue under the AEEP. All three stakeholder groups play a significant role in the development of the energy sector, both in Africa and in the EU. The Partnership Forum would aim to increase awareness amongst decision makers, civil society and researchers of the challenges and opportunities of sustainable energy and to attract investment in support of new activities in Africa.

Though the Forum was originally intended to take place every two years, concrete plans for the first one have yet to be made. The IT has struggled with identifying a format and mechanisms for involving the non-state stakeholders. Suggestions were put forward jointly by the European contact organizations in September 2009.¹ Delays in identifying the African contact organizations have been suggested by officials as the reason for the delay in arranging the Partnership Forum.

Road Map

The action plan for the AEEP, mirroring the JAES Action Plan, is the '[Road Map](#).' This was adopted by the JEG in September 2009 and is to be approved by the High Level Meeting in April 2010. The Road Map is being seen as a 'living document,' to be reviewed regularly and revised as part of the dialogue in the AEEP process.

The first JEG meeting held in October 2008 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, confirmed the priority areas to be addressed by the Road Map of the Partnership:

- Promoting regional integration of electricity markets in Africa,
- Promoting an enabling environment to enhance private investment,
- Developing energy interconnections between Africa and Europe,

- Launching a Renewable Energy Cooperation Programme,
- Supporting the reduction of gas flaring and venting,
- Mobilising additional resources for investment in the energy sector both on supply and demand side, notably to improve access to energy services,
- Making progress in implementing existing EC support to enhance the institutional and technical capacity of the AUC,
- Strengthening cooperation to improve energy efficiency in all energy sectors,
- Facilitating contacts and increasing exchanges of know-how between relevant European institutions and their African counterparts.

The Road Map is based on contributions from the African and EU Implementing Teams, and from African and EU member states. There was consultation with African stakeholders such as Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Power Pools. Comments on the draft Road Map from civil society (Practical Action and Venro) and the business sector (Alliance for Rural Electrification) were given at a meeting of the European Implementing Team on 3 June 2009. Further comments were made by Venro to the Implementing Team in February 2010.

The AEEP Road Map or action plan gives priority to large-scale energy infrastructure investments, which do not necessarily lead to rural development, poverty reduction and equitable access to modern energy services. The Road Map includes the provision for energy exchange infrastructure between Africa and Europe, which seems to address mainly the energy security interests of Europe.

Decentralised, renewable options, which do not feature strongly in the Road Map, are generally more cost effective for rural areas where there are low incomes and low population densities. These require more support for local capacity building on technical, management and institutional levels, as well as appropriate financing mechanisms for both consumers and service providers. More focus should also be given to

¹
<http://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=0ASlajRmrk125ZGNwNTczdZfMWNyamRrZGNo&hl=en&pli=1>

household energy and the development of modern biomass energy options, in recognition of their contribution to poverty reduction.

Future Engagement

A strength of the agreed structure and processes of the JAES and of the component partnerships, is the provision for civil society to participate in the dialogue between Africa and Europe. So far civil society organizations have participated in some of the first meetings of the Joint Experts Groups, and in the case of the Energy Partnership were expected to be an integral part of a Partnership Forum, along with representatives from business and the research community.

The officially designated European civil society contact organization for the AEEP is Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-E), a result of their participation in early consultations about the JAES. In 2009 Practical Action and Venro provided civil society comment on AEEP matters, and with the agreement of CAN-E and the European IT, Practical Action has assumed the role of main contact. However, the IT does not yet routinely keep civil society informed.

The participation of African civil society in the dialogue of the AEEP has been even more difficult. The official mechanism established by the AUC, the ECOSOCC, for one reason or another has not enabled African civil society organizations to be involved so far. The lack of nominated civil society representatives has not only delayed arrangement of the Partnership Forum, but contributed to lack of debate amongst civil society organizations in Africa about the AEEP and its Road Map. The availability of more information about the AEEP might encourage African CSOs to speak to their governments about it, and thus encourage AU Member States to call for the involvement of all African non-state stakeholder groups.

The High Level Meeting in April 2010 is expected to agree 'political targets,' approve the Road Map and endorse proposals for a Renewable Energy Cooperation Programme. The conclusions of this meeting and of future JEG meetings, as well as of the Partnership Forum, would be enhanced by taking into account the perspectives of African and European civil society. To ensure that these perspectives are heard, despite provisions under the JAES, civil society in Africa and Europe will continue to need to advocate for this, to governments and the international bodies.

Further Information

The official website for the Africa-EU Partnership

http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/partnerships/items/energy_en.htm

News and Resources on the Joint Africa-EU Strategy

http://europafrica.net/jointstrategy/5_energy/
<http://europafrica.net/civil-society/>

Strengthening Popular Participation in the African Union: A Guide to AU Structures and Processes, Oxfam/AfriMAP, 2009.

<http://www.afrimap.org/english/images/report/AfriMAP-AU-Guide-EN.pdf>

Report from the Second AU-CSO Consultation on the Implementation of the Africa-Europe Partnership, 3-5 March 2009.

<http://europafrica.files.wordpress.com/2007/02/reportau-eunairobi2009-2.doc>

Prospects for Africa – Europe's Policies: The VENRO Project on the Africa-EU Partnership

<http://www.prospects-for-africa.de/?L=1>

Practical Action is an international development NGO working with people in poor communities in Africa, South Asia and Latin America, to help them choose and use technology to improve their lives. We work with people living in poverty to build their capabilities, improve their access to technical options and knowledge, and to help them