

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

MISSION PERMANENTE A BRUXELLES

**Avenue Gustave Demey, 72-74 1160 Bruxelles (Belgique) Tel: (322) 346.97.47/48 Fax: (322) 346.97.28
Email: africanunion@skynet.be Website : www.au.int**

**Working Group on a greater involvement of the
Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels
In the follow-up of Africa-EU cooperation**

Progress report



**Working Group on a greater involvement of the
Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels
In the follow-up of Africa-EU cooperation**

Progress report

1. The Working Group on a Greater Involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in Africa-EU Cooperation was effectively established on 14 June 2011 by the meeting of the then current Bureau chaired by H. E. Mr Hanno Burkhard Rumpf, Ambassador of Namibia. As agreed by the meeting, the Working Group was composed, as indicated below, of members of the above mentioned Bureau, including the ex-officio and Troïka members and, in addition, the Chairman of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors if he/she represents an AU member state.

Chairman: Namibia

Vice Chairmen:

Burkina Faso (West Africa)
Burundi (Central Africa)
Libya (North Africa)
Swaziland (Southern Africa)
Djibouti (East Africa)

Ex-officio members:

Equatorial Guinea (Honorary Chairman, in its capacity as current AU Chairman);
H. E. Mr Mohamed Moussa CHEHEM, Ambassador of Djibouti in Brussels (Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps)

Troïka:

Namibia (current Chairman)
Mali (outgoing Chairman)
Senegal (future Chairman)
Nigeria (Chairman of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors)

2. It was further agreed that a group of experts composed of two Embassy Counsellors (one substantive member and an alternate) per region would be set up to facilitate the work of the working group placed under the chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of the African Union in Brussels. Following the required consultations, the Group of experts was composed as follows:

East Africa	West Africa	Central Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa
Kenya (M)	Gambia (M)	Burundi (M)	Tunisia (M)	Zambia (M)
Ethiopia (A)	Mali (A)	Gabon(A)	Algeria (?)	South Africa (A)

Troika: Senegal (current Chairman of the African Group)

Chairman: Chargé d'affaires a.i of the African Union Mission

3. Even though the regions took some time to designate their representatives mainly because of the summer vacation, the Group of experts is now operational. It has already met twice, focusing mainly on the constitution of the Group and the organisation of its work. An overall exchange of views on some of the key concerns highlighted in the terms of reference has already led to the following observations:

- a) **Attribution within the AU of a formal status to the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels:** It has been observed that like the African Groups of Ambassadors in Geneva and in New York, the African Group of Brussels is an informal group established as the result of the sheer political will of its members to endow themselves, among other objectives, with ways and means of coordinating their action vis-à-vis the international and/or intergovernmental institutions to which they are accredited, on the one hand, and on the other, to harmonise the positions that they may be called upon to adopt vis-à-vis those same institutions with those of the AU, with a view to defend and promote Africa's interests on the international scene. The only exception to this is the Group of African Ambassadors in Addis Ababa, better known as the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) and clearly identified and referred to in the AU Constitutive Act (Art. 5) as one of the AU's formal organs, like the Assembly of Heads of State, the Executive Council, the Commission, etc. Henceforth, should such be necessary, the attribution within the AU of a formal status to the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels would require an amendment of the AU Constitutive Act.

- b) **Contribution of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels to the work of the AU (Commission):** Based on the above, the best way forward for the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels to contribute to the work of the AU would be to work in coordination with the PRC. To do so, the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels could identify issues of interest to Africa, among those addressed by the EU, the ACP Group and other partners operating in its constituency and could initiate, therefrom, a draft Resolution or Decision to be submitted to the PRC for consideration and submission to the appropriate AU organs, through the Executive Council. Such a pro active move would be particularly advisable if done on the eve of important AU meetings (Executive Council, Assembly, sectoral ministerial meetings, etc.).

- c) **Working relations between the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and the PRC:** The respective Bureaux of both Groups could have

regular and sustained contacts. In addition to an exchange of correspondence and information on issues of mutual interest, it would be useful to have an exchange of visits, if not between the two Bureaux, at least between their two Chairmen.

- d) **Creation of formal working relations with the EU institutions:** The identification of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels as one of the actors in the implementation of the Africa-EU Joint Partnership requires the Group to establish formal working relations with the EU institutions and, in particular, the EU Commission and Council. A dialogue framework could be created and operationalised every six months to a year. It would henceforth be most advisable to contact the COAFR (the European Council Africa Working Group) to examine the issue together.
 - e) **Enhancing the visibility of the Group of African Ambassadors on the diplomatic scene of Brussels:** The Group should revisit its old practice of holding meetings periodically with the Ambassadors from other regional geopolitical entities and from third countries accredited in Brussels. Such meetings are nowadays all the more important as Africa, through the AU, has established strong partnerships with many other regions or third countries throughout the world, such as for instance, Latin America, the United States, Japan, China, India, Turkey, etc. The finalisation of the establishment of the Afro-Arab Committee of Brussels should be part of this momentum.
 - f) **Strengthening the AU Mission in Brussels:** The issue of a meaningful strengthening of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels should include the extension and deepening of the Africa-EU relations and its corollary, AU-EU cooperation as demonstrated by the adoption of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and its related Plan of Action. To meet the challenge of the increased workload resulting from this new situation, it will be necessary to strengthen the staff of the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels.
4. The Working Group is still at work. It intends to submit its final report to the 144th session of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels to be held on 2 November 2011. However, this should not in any way jeopardise the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations on some issues of concern raised in the terms of reference, such as the ones referred to here above. It might be useful to refer to the work programme proposed by the Senegalese presidency for its tenure from July to December 2011. The work programme was adopted by the 142nd session of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels.

AFRICAN UNION UNION AFRICAINE

African Union Common Repository

<http://archives.au.int>

Specialized Technical and representational Agencies

Permanent Mission of the African Union in Brussels

2011

Working Group on a greater involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in the follow-up of Africa-EU cooperation

Permanent Mission of the African Union in Brussels

<http://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/1958>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository