



MISSION PERMANENTE A BRUXELLES

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UA.BRU/FC/SG-CUA /GR-AFR/UA-UE/312.11

Bruxelles le 14 décembre 2011

A : Jean MFASONI (Amb.)
Secrétaire général de la Commission

De : Cheikh Niang
Fonctionnaire en charge



Objet : Implication du Groupe africain des Ambassadeurs à Bruxelles dans le suivi de la coopération Afrique-UE

En vue de se donner les voies et moyens d'être mieux associé à la mise en œuvre de la coopération entre l'Afrique et l'Union européenne, en général, du partenariat stratégique Afrique-UE, en particulier et son corollaire, la coopération UA-UE, le Groupe africain des Ambassadeurs à Bruxelles avait mis sur pied un « **Groupe de travail sur une meilleure implication du Groupe africain des Ambassadeurs à Bruxelles dans le suivi de la coopération Afrique-UE** ».

Cette initiative s'est avérée d'autant plus pertinente que, dans le texte de la seconde édition du Partenariat stratégique Afrique-UE et du Plan d'action 2011-2013 y afférent, adoptés par le 3^{ème} Sommet Afrique-UE (novembre 2010 à Tripoli), il est explicitement fait mention du rôle que devrait pouvoir jouer le Groupe africain des Ambassadeurs à Bruxelles dans la mise en œuvre de ses instruments de coopération. A cette assertion s'ajoute la volonté exprimée par ce Groupe africain d'assurer une nécessaire articulation entre l'action déterminante qu'il mène dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre de l'Accord de partenariat ACP-UE de Cotonou et celle qui lui est dévolue dans l'implémentation du Partenariat stratégique Afrique-UE.

Je vous prie de trouver, ci-joint, pour votre considération, le rapport final du Groupe de travail susmentionné.

Ce rapport a été adopté au cours d'une retraite que la Mission a organisée pour le Groupe africain, les 10 et 11 novembre 2011 à Liège, sur le changement climatique, en préparation de la récente Conférence des Nations unies sur le sujet à Durban.

La Mission vous saurait particulièrement gré des commentaires que ce rapport pourrait susciter auprès des autorités de la Commission et de ses services compétents.

Je vous remercie.

CC : - Bureau du Président
- Bureau du vice-président
- Commissaire Affaire politique.

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**Report of the Working Group on a Greater Involvement of the
Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels
In the Follow-up of Africa-EU Cooperation**

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Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels
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1. At its 140th ordinary session held on 19 January 2011, the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels decided to mandate its then current Bureau to make all necessary provisions to set up a Working Group to examine ways and means of ensuring a greater involvement of the African Group in the implementation of the cooperation instruments linking Africa to the European Union, particularly, the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and its related Plan of Action. The Bureau then met on 23 February 2011 and decided to name the Group: **“Working Group on a Greater Involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in Africa-EU Cooperation”**. It further adopted its terms of reference. However, the Group was effectively established only on 14 June 2011 by the meeting of the then current Bureau chaired by H. E. Mr Hanno Burkhard Rumpf, Ambassador of Namibia.

I. Composition

2. As agreed by the Bureau at its meeting on 14 June 2011, the Working Group is composed, as follows, of members of the above mentioned Bureau, including the ex-officio and Troïka members, as well as 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)

3. It was further agreed that for the preparatory work upstream, a Group of Experts composed of two Embassy Counselors (one substantive member and an alternate) per region would be designated and chaired by the Chargé d’Affaires a.i of the Permanent

Mission of the African Union in Brussels. After the required consultations, the Group of Experts was composed as follows:

East Africa	West Africa	Central Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa
Kenya (M): Ms Jennifer K. Njiru, Minister Counsellor Ethiopia (A): Tesfakiros Hailu (Counsellor)	Gambia (M): Mr. Kawsu Darri, 1 st Secretary Mali (A): Baba Cheibani Counsellor	Burundi (M): Mr Alexis Bizimungu Gabon(A):	Tunisia (M): Mr Abdellatif Fezzani, Minister, Plenipotentiary Algeria (A)/ M. Zergot	Zambia (M): Ms Georgina C. MUTALE, Counsellor (Adm/Pol) South Africa (A): N.L Dikweni, Minister, Plenipotentiary L. Klopper, Counsellor

Troïka: Senegal (current Chairman of the African Group): Mr Stephan S. Sambou, Counsellor

Chairman of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors – Nigeria: Mr Peter IYAMABO, Minister

Chairman: Cheikh T. Niang, Chargé d'Affaires a.i Permanent Mission of the African Union

II. Consideration of the terms of reference

4. The Working Group based its work on the terms of reference adopted by the Bureau. It examined them in depth and had a broad exchange of views on ways and means of enhancing the action and coherence of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels on the one hand and ensuring its increased involvement in Africa-EU cooperation, on the other.

a) **Working relations between the African Group of Brussels and the AU organs:** it was observed that like the African Groups of New York and Geneva in particular, the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels is an informal Group born out of its members political will to endow themselves, among other objectives, with ways and means of coordinating their action vis-à-vis the international and/or intergovernmental institutions which they are accredited to on the one hand, and on the other, to harmonize their positions with those adopted within the AU, with a view to defending and promoting Africa's interests on the international arena. The only exception in this regard is **the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC)** which is explicitly identified in the AU Constitutive Act (Art. 5) as one of the formal AU organs like the Assembly of Heads of State, the Executive Council, the Commission, etc. Hence, should such be necessary, the attribution of a formal status to the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels within the AU would require an amendment of the AU Constitutive Act. Henceforth, the African Groups which are not based on the continent use the PRC as a channel to contribute to

the action of the African Union Commission or, of the other AU decision making organs, such as the Executive Council and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Given the above, the best way forward for the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels to contribute to the work of the AU is to work in coordination with the PRC. In the same vein, the African Group of Brussels should also coordinate with its counterparts in Geneva and New York, as links may exist between issues addressed within the EU in Brussels and those being discussed at the United Nations in New York and/or Geneva.

Based on the above, the Working Group recommends to the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels to:

- **Identify issues of interest to Africa, among those addressed by the EU, the ACP Group and other partners operating in its constituency (the whole EU territory) to initiate, if necessary, related Draft Resolutions or Decisions to be submitted to the PRC with a report, for consideration and submission to the appropriate AU organs, through the Executive Council. Such an exercise would be particularly advisable on the eve of important AU meetings (Assembly, Executive Council, sector ministerial meetings, etc.);**
 - **Establish sustained working relations between the PRC and the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels, through their respective Bureaus (exchange of information, working visits, etc.), liaised by the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels;**
 - **Seek, for the same purpose, ways of establishing working and coordination relations with the African Groups in Geneva and New York;**
 - **Make the Chairperson of the African Union Commission aware of the need to invite the Chairperson of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels to participate in the main AU meetings (Executive Council, Summit) and AU-EU meetings (Africa-EU Summit, Task Force and other meetings related to the implementation of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, etc.).**
- b) Working relations with the EU institutions:** So far, no real working relations have been established between the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and the EU institutions, in spite of the numerous attempts mainly initiated by the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels. To date, only a few informal meetings have been held periodically between the African Group and the European Council Working Group on Africa (COAFR) which is composed of Permanent Representatives of the EU Member States. In 2010, under the Czech presidency of the EU, it had been agreed with the COAFR that each EU presidency would

make it a point to organise a meeting between the COAFR and the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels. Meetings have thus been organised under the Swedish and Spanish presidencies. However, the meetings were informal and solely limited to exchanges of good intentions without any fundamental substance. It should be underlined that with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the restructuring of the EU Commission, the COAFR was re-shuffled. Nonetheless its action still focuses on the follow-up of Africa-EU cooperation.

Now that in the new Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and its related 2011-2013 Plan of Action adopted by the 3rd Africa-EU Summit in Tripoli (Libya) in November 2010, the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels is specifically mentioned as one of the implementing actors, there is a need to envisage making the working relations with the COAFR, and even with the European Commission and possibly, the Development Commission of the European Parliament more formal.

The Working Group henceforth recommends the following:

- **The AU Permanent Mission in Brussels should be requested to explore with COAFR the possibility of establishing formal working relations with the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels through the creation of a dialogue framework which could meet once under every EU Presidency;**
 - **The AU Commission should be requested to concretely work out the modalities for an effective involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in the follow-up of the Joint Strategy, as underlined in the provisions on the coordination of action of the various protagonists of the Africa-EU Partnership;**
 - **The AU Permanent Mission in Brussels should be mandated to do the same with the other EU institutions involved in the implementation of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy such as the EC, the EP Development Commission, etc.**
- c) Enhancing the visibility of the Group of African Ambassadors on the diplomatic scene in Brussels:** The Group should revisit its old practice of holding periodic meetings with Ambassadors from the other regional geopolitical entities and from third countries accredited in Brussels. Such meetings are nowadays all the more advisable as Africa has established, through the AU, 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 finalization of the establishment of the Afro-Arab Committee of Brussels should form part of this process.

The Working Group henceforth recommends the following:

- The AU Permanent Mission in Brussels should be mandated to contact the other regional groupings represented in Brussels (Groups of the Organisation of American States, of the Arab League Countries, of ASEAN, etc.) as well as the representations in Brussels of countries in partnership with Africa (China, USA, Japan, India, Turkey, etc.), to explore the possibility of establishing sustained contacts and working relations to better promote their mutual interests;
 - The AU Permanent Mission in Brussels should be requested to make, without delay, the necessary provisions to reactivate and finalize the establishment of the Afro-Arab Committee of Ambassadors in Brussels, as requested by the AU Commission and the LAS' General Secretariat;
 - The AU Permanent Mission in Brussels should be urged to initiate contacts between the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and some key actors of the Africa-EU or international cooperation (EU Member States, United Nations Agencies, civil society association movements, private sector institutions, etc.).
- d) **Enhancing the visibility of the African component of the ACP Group of States:** It should be underlined that it is at the explicit request of the African Group of Brussels that the OAU Council of Ministers took, in 1979, the decision to open an OAU Office in Brussels to serve as a support and coordination structure to the African Group, particularly in its action within the ACP Group of States. It should also be noted that in spite of this background and of the un-measurable efforts made to that effect, it has been particularly difficult if not impossible to have the African Group identify itself as such within the ACP Group of States, as opposed to the two other regions of the Group, namely, the Caribbean and Pacific. The reason invoked to explain this situation is the division of Africa into four regions within the ACP Group: East Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa and Central Africa. This makes the African Group act in the ACP forum not as an African Group but rather as representing each of the African regions identified in the ACP configuration. While such an approach can be justified in some very specific cases (EPA, RIP, etc), it should logically be cast aside when issues relating for instance to ACP-EU cooperation, peace and security, geo-strategy, environment etc are at stake given that on such issues, Africa may, through the AU, have different positions from those of its partners from other continents or geopolitical zones.

The Working Group therefore makes the following recommendations:

- The AU Permanent Mission in Brussels should ensure that a meeting of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels is

organised on the eve of every major ACP meeting (Council of Ministers, Parliamentary Assembly, Summit, sector meetings, etc.), to adopt, if necessary, an African common position on the items on the agenda of the meeting concerned;

- The Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels should initiate specific actions with the view to identifying itself as such within the ACP Group, by for instance speaking on behalf of all the African regions whenever necessary, rather than having the respective “coordinators” of the African regions express speak on behalf of their own specific region.

e) **Strengthening the AU Mission in Brussels:** As underlined here above, the OAU Office in Brussels (which has now become the Permanent Mission of the African Union in Brussels) was opened in 1979 with the main objective of supporting the African Group of Brussels. At that time and until the adoption of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy, only the successive Lomé Conventions (nowadays, the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement) were governing the cooperation relations between Africa and the EU. More than thirty years later, it must be admitted that with the multidimensional transformations which have occurred worldwide, the enhanced development of international relations and the emergence of bi-lateral relations between Africa and Europe, evidenced by the adoption of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and its related Plan of Action, the adaptation of the structures monitoring such relations has become a necessity. In other words, to face the increasing volume of work resulting from this new situation, it would be advisable to strengthen the capacity of the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels.

Hence, the following recommendations of the Working Group:

- The Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the PRC should be sensitized about the urgent need to implement the commitment made in the 2011-2013 Plan of Action of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy to strengthen the capacity of the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels, to enable it to meet the challenge of the increased workload resulting from the obvious enhancement of the cooperation relations between Africa and the EU, in general and from the coordination and harmonization role of the African Group of Brussels in the implementation of those instruments;
- The AU Commission’s authorities should be urged to ensure that the officers selected to work at the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels have sound qualifications and competence.

- **The AU Permanent Representative in Brussels should be urged to follow-up this request to ensure that it is finalized as soon as possible.**

f) **Need to review the Rules of Procedure of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels:** The Rules of Procedure of the Group of Ambassadors in Brussels were last reviewed in 2003 for the third time. The main objective was to adapt the rules to the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) becoming the African Union (AU). Thus, only minor amendments were made to the text relating mainly to: 1) the term of office of the Bureau of the Group (Article 9) which was increased from three (3) to six (6) months to tally with the existing practice for the PRC, the AU Executive Council, the ACP Committee of Ambassadors and the EU Council; 2) the introduction of a new Chapter on the Group's budget (Article 10) which is used to finance its activities (receptions and gifts offered when an Ambassador, member of the Group is leaving; meetings between the Group and other Groups, contribution of the Group to the celebration of Africa Day, etc.). The contribution of Embassies to the Group's budget was raised from 3.000 Belgian francs (+/- 90 Euros) to 200 Euros. Considering the above, a new review of the Rules could be envisaged to cater for the new developments marking the relations between Africa and the EU and its corollary, AU-EU cooperation, following, in particular, the adoption of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and its related Plan of Action. Such a revision should also include the budget and while its title could be maintained the means of financing should at least be reviewed (contributions of Embassies of Member States of the Group) given the extension and diversification of the activities that the Group has decided to undertake. Furthermore, without there being a need to enshrine it in the reviewed Rules of Procedure, it would be most advisable to draw the attention of the Group's Members to the absolute need to strictly respect the provisions of the Rules of Procedure, particularly as regards the proceedings of meetings, to ensure a greater efficiency of the Group's action.

The recommendations of the Working Group are therefore as follows:

- **There should be a fourth review of the Rules of Procedure to take into account the developments of the past years in the relations between Africa and the EU and between the EU and the AU. Amendments to that effect should be on Chapter I on the "Objectives and Functions" of the African Group of Brussels;**
- **The Group should agree to have the contributions of Embassies to its own budget increased to 500 Euros per year.**
- **There is a need to recall the importance of the participation of Ambassadors in the Group's meetings and to focus the discussions on the substance, for the sake of time and efficiency.**

5. The Working Group wishes to seize the opportunity to sincerely thank and congratulate the members of the designated Group of Experts for their notable work done under the chairmanship of the Chargé d'Affaires a.i of the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels. It also expresses its thanks to all the members of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels for their confidence. It further thanks the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels, for having facilitated the organisation and proceedings of its work.

Adopted at the Retreat of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels
Liege, 10-11 November 2011

Chairman of the Working Group
H. E. Mr Hanno Burkhard RUMPF
Ambassador of Namibia

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