

## GROUP OF AFRICAN AMBASSADORS IN BRUSSELS

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### ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OUTGOING BUREAU H. E. Mr HANNO BURKHARD, AMBASSADOR OF NAMIBIA FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2011

1. The report under consideration covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30 June 2011 during which I had the honour to chair the Bureau mandated pursuant to Article 9.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels.
2. The Bureau was composed as follows:

**Chairman:** Namibia

**Deputy Chairpersons:** Burkina Faso (West Africa)  
Angola (Central Africa)  
Libya ((North Africa)  
Swaziland (South Africa)  
Djibouti (East Africa)

**Ex officio members:**

- Honorary Chairman: current Chairman of the African Union, **Equatorial Guinea (to be confirmed)**
- Dean of the African diplomatic corps: H. E. Mr Mohamed Moussa CHEHEM, Ambassador of Djibouti in Brussels.

**Troïka:**

- Namibia (current Chairman)
  - Mali (outgoing Chairman)
  - Nigeria (future Chairman)
3. During his term, the African Group undertook many activities of which the most significant are the following:
    - Organisation of a meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and the Group of African Ambassadors ;

- Organisation of a meeting between the Group of African Ambassadors and the European External Action Service (EEAS) on the UN Resolution to give the EU the right to speak at the UN General Assembly;
- Organisation of activities for the celebration of "Africa Day" 2011;
- Setting up of a working group on a better involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in the follow-up of Africa-EU cooperation;
- Organisation of a meeting between the Bureau of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H. E. Mr Jean Ping.

I. **MEETING BETWEEN THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA AND THE GROUP OF AFRICAN AMBASSADORS**

4. The outgoing Bureau honoured the request of H. E. Mr Samuel ZBOGAR, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia asking for a meeting with the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels to enable him to address it on the following:

- Slovenia's expectations vis-à-vis the 16<sup>th</sup> AU Summit (January 2011)
- Slovenia's activities in Africa
- Slovenia's views on AU/EU relations
- Slovenia's candidature for a post of non-permanent member of the United Nations' Security Council for the period 2012-2013

5. The meeting took place at ACP House on 25 January 2011. It was followed by a reception offered by H. E. Mr Samuel ZBOGAR. Further to the in-depth exchange of views on the above mentioned topics, the meeting was also used as an opportunity to sensitize Slovenia on Africa's major and priority interests which it intends to defend in the framework of its relations with the EU. The issue of the EPA negotiations and of the implementation of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership was hence raised.

II. **MEETING BETWEEN THE GROUP OF AFRICAN AMABASSADORS AND THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (EEAS) ON THE UN RESOLUTION TO ALLOW THE EU TO PARTICIPATE IN THE UN DELIBERATIONS**

6. The Group invited Mr Andersen Guimaraes, Adviser for Multilateral Affairs at the European External Action Service (EEAS) and head of the working group coordinating the campaign for a UN resolution on the participation of the EU in

the deliberations of the United Nations General Assembly to address, at his own request, the 140<sup>th</sup> session of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels on 19 January 2011. In his communication, Mr Guimaraes noted that the draft resolution for the participation of the EU in the works of the United Nations, as submitted in September 2010, was not mature enough. The main mistake was to have rushed to submit it without taking the time to explain it properly to the member states. Hence its rejection. The EU intends to correct the process, hence its decision to submit a new text and give member states time to examine it. This new text demonstrates that the EU's ambition is not exaggerated. The EU will keep its status as observer. This will not in any way be an usurpation of the prerogatives of the UN member states. The negotiations on this new text will take place in New York, probably in February 2011, before its submission again to the General Assembly for adoption. However the EU would like to rely on the African Group of Brussels to rally the support of its member states for the adoption of the Resolution concerned.

7. While welcoming the communication, some delegations talked about the need to have regular exchanges between the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and the European Commission or some of its structures. They also expressed some regret about the fact that the EC only deems it necessary to meet the African Group when its own agenda so requires, such as for the adoption of the above mentioned Resolution. They also deplored the tendency to treat Africa, not as one united block, but as different zones of interest.
8. The Bureau took the above observations into account when the decision was taken to set up a working group to reflect on ways and means of involving the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels more deeply in the implementation of the cooperation between Africa and the EU, and between the AU and the EU.

### III. CELEBRATION OF "AFRICA DAY" 2010

9. As per the tradition, the outgoing Bureau made all necessary provisions to organize, in close collaboration with the AU Mission in Brussels, various events to celebrate "Africa Day 2011", in commemoration of the establishment of the OAU on 25 May 1963. The theme selected this year by the AU Commission was "**Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development**". This placed the event specifically in the framework of the African Youth Charter adopted by the AU in 2006 and entered into force in 2009. Emphasis was laid on ways and means of "Promoting Youth Employment for Social Cohesion and Inclusive Growth".
10. An organization committee was set up at which each African region was represented. Given the specific nature of the Group and in particular its

geographical location in Brussels, next to the EU, the Bureau agreed to articulate the program of events as follows:

- **A conference** on the theme: “African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the Africa-EU Political Dialogue” facilitated by Ambassador Emile Ognimba, Director of the Department of Political Affairs of the AU Commission, with a contribution from the European External Action Service (24/05/2011).
- **A reception** was hosted for more than 400 guests including representatives of the diplomatic corps and of the main partners of Africa and of the African Diaspora in Belgium. It was an opportunity to enjoy the national and regional African dishes offered by the Embassies of Member States of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels.
- **African cultural shows** (songs and dances from Gabon, drummers from Burundi).

#### **IV. CREATION OF A WORKING GROUP ON A GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF THE GROUP OF AFRICAN AMBASSADORS IN BRUSSELS IN THE FOLLOW UP OF AFRICA-EU COOPERATION**

11. In seeking ways and means to enhance the dynamism of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels and bearing in mind the in-depth exchanges of views that the Group had on the matter, on various occasions, in its plenary sessions, the Bureau decided to set up a “**Working Group on a Greater Involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in the Follow-up of Africa-EU Cooperation**”. The working group was thus mandated to examine the strategy needed to enhance the involvement of the Group in the implementation of cooperation instruments between Africa and the European Union, particularly as regards the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and its related Plan of Action.
12. The group was effectively established at the end of the Bureau’s term of office, last July. It was decided that it would operate at two levels:
  - Experts (Embassy Counsellors): two representatives per region including a substantive member and an alternate;
  - Ambassadors: members of the outgoing Bureau including the ex-officio members and the Troïka.
13. It was agreed that the working group would submit its final report in September 2011. However, because of the holiday period which followed its effective

coming into being, it could only start working after the recess. Its final report can therefore be expected for the end of October at the earliest.

**V. MEETING BETWEEN THE BUREAU AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION, H. E. Mr JEAN PING**

14. The Bureau seized the opportunity of a working visit in Brussels of H. E. Mr Jean Ping, the AU Chairperson to meet him on 16 June 2011 at the Permanent Mission of the African Union in Brussels. Among other topics discussed, the concerns of the Group of African Ambassadors regarding, in particular, its working relations with the AU Commission and its obvious lack of involvement in the follow-up of the cooperation between Africa and the EU and between the AU and the EU were raised.
15. During the discussions, the AUC Chairperson deplored the insufficient contacts between the AUC authorities and the African Ambassadors in Brussels, given the key role that the latter could play in the follow-up and implementation of the Africa-EU Partnership. He also expressed some regret about the fact that their relations and interactions with their counterparts in Addis Ababa were rather timid. He added that it would be advisable to get some inspiration from the African Groups of New York and Washington which have managed to establish working and exchange relations with the Member States' Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) in Addis Ababa, with a view to develop synergies for action, particularly in the United Nations foras. He expressed his readiness to help initiate a constructive dialogue between the two Groups, as, he added, it is in the interest of the Commission which endeavors to have Africa speak in one voice and adopt coordinated strategies to better defend its interests.
16. Following up on this momentum, the Chairperson gave immediate instructions to his cabinet, to send an invitation to the Chairman of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels, to enable him to participate in the 17<sup>th</sup> AU Summit to be held in July in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The opportunity could also be seized, he further added, to discuss with his PRC counterpart about ways and means of coordinating the two Groups' action.
17. Following the Ambassadors expression of regret for the long delay observed to appoint a new AU Permanent Representative in Brussels, Chairperson Ping promised to contact again the South African authorities who had asked for the post, to request them to speed up the process and to designate the candidate they wish to propose.

18. The Chairperson of the Commission also referred to the numerous efforts made by the AU to find a lasting solution to the conflicts and challenges affecting the continent and in particular, to maintain its leadership of the operations by having the international community respect the decisions and resolutions taken by African Heads of State. Taking the example of Libya, he explained that the AU managed to avoid the difficulties experienced by the Arab League. The AU elaborated a roadmap based on the following process:

- Immediate cease-fire;
- Solutions to the humanitarian cases;
- Creation of inclusive and consensual transition institutions;
- Creation of an institutional framework for the organization of free democratic elections;
- Introduction of the necessary reforms to meet the democratic aspirations of the Libyan people.

19. Chairperson Ping further highlighted the differences between the AU and the approach of some partners (EU, NATO, UN) who are calling for a change of individuals, while the AU is advocating a process which would lead to a change of system. He expressed some regret about the reactions of the international community vis-à-vis Libya because, he added, the examples of Somalia, Irak and Afghanistan have proved that the methods and use of force against those countries have rather contributed to worsen the situation.

20. It must be mentioned that because of prior commitments and of the short deadline in particular, the Bureau was not able to take the necessary steps to honor the invitation to participate in the 17<sup>th</sup> AU Summit in Malabo. It would therefore be advisable to send the invitation in time and enough notice. Cf recommendations

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

21. The following recommendations are made, based on the above:

- The working group for a greater involvement of the Group of African Ambassadors in Brussels in the follow-up of the cooperation between Africa and the EU and between the AU and the EU should be encouraged to submit its conclusions to enable the African Group to use them as an inspiration to give a new momentum to its action

and to strengthen its role and its visibility, not only in the framework of Africa-EU cooperation, but also on the diplomatic scene in Brussels (continued contacts with the other regions represented in Brussels, etc.).

- The AU Permanent Mission in Brussels should be urged to carry on with the initiative to organize meetings and/or sustained contacts between the African Group and the EU Member States, particularly their ministers of foreign affairs, as such would enable the African Group to directly sensitize member states to the need to better articulate the cooperation between Africa and the EU with the conditions of economic and social development.
- The Ambassadors, members of the African Group should take greater ownership of the Group's action and should endeavor to participate personally in the Group's meetings to enhance the quality of the exchanges of views on Africa's key interests. The same would apply to the various events organized by the Group to highlight a significant event for Africa and/or the AU.

## **THANKS**

22. On behalf of all the members of the outgoing Bureau and in my own name, I wish to sincerely thank all the members of our Group who, in a move for solidarity and sheer abnegation, spared no efforts to contribute individually and collectively and with determination, to the action that we carried out. We do hope that we deserved their confidence in us and in our team, to defend the interests of our Group and strengthen our solidarity.

23. We would also like to thank and encourage the staff of the Permanent Mission of the African Union in Brussels which, in spite of its limited staff has worked with devotion to serve our Group with efficiency and a sense of duty as a secretariat.

24. We would also like to sincerely congratulate the new Bureau and are particularly happy to hand over the torch of our Group to it. We wish it the best success in its mandate to defend the well understood interests of our Group and those of Africa in Brussels.

**H. E. Mr Hanno Burkhard Rumpf  
Ambassador of Namibia**

2011-10-10

Activity Report of the Outgoing Bureau  
of the Group of African Ambassadors  
in Brussels, under the Chairmanship of  
H.E. Mr. Hanno Burkhard Rumpf,  
Ambassador of the Namibia in  
Brussels, for the period from 1st  
January to 30 June 2011

Permanent Mission of the African Union in Brussels

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