

THE PLAN AFRICA 2006-2008: ISSUES FOR DEBATE

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The context of the Plan Africa designed by the Spanish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC) is that of a reformulation of the global agenda for the development of Africa, as a result of the common features observed in the speeches of several bilateral and multilateral donors regarding what the plan intends to achieve. The different transformations and initiatives formulated in recent years, such as the change of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU), the creation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the G8 Africa Action Plan, the new EU strategy for Africa, and the publication of the report of the so-called 'Blair Commission' for Africa, amongst others, together with the recently approved Plan of the Spanish government, are all trying to shape a new strategy for the fight against poverty in Africa, a strategy which the main actors more or less agree on, regarding the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the implementation of the so-called 'new instruments' for development cooperation.

So far the different actions carried out by Spain towards Africa, and the sub-Saharan region in particular, were in need of a serious reformulation and reorientation. The new Plan helps put some order in the previous situation. Nevertheless, this paper discusses some of the limitations, deficiencies and inconsistencies of this newly created Plan under a constructive approach. From the data and appreciations obtained from a more detailed analysis and the backgrounder document provided by FRIDE, the authors would like to point out a number of issues for debate in relation to the Plan Africa.

Budget Limitations

Following international recommendations and commitments, Spain seems to be willing to increase the amount of aid it provides to the African continent. However, not only the Plan fails to detail the percentages for each line of intervention and the monitoring indicators for the assessment of the interventions, but it should also be noted that the assigned funds, even though higher than in the past, are still manifestly insufficient for the implementation of such an ambitious plan.¹

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¹ The Plan is expected to spend around 120 million Euros in 2008, which is barely what football players Beckham, Ronaldo and Zidane earned in 2005, and slightly more than one third of the 405 million Euros Spain received in 2004 from arms exports; also worth mentioning is the 11 million Euros revenue from arms exported from Spain to Sudan and Ghana between 2003 and 2004, both countries subject to international arms embargoes; Sanz Paratcha, 2006.

It should also be pointed out that the current trend is to try to maintain the amount of aid managed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs),² despite their loss of relevance in the relationship reinforcement processes between donors and their African partners on the basis of the principles of appropriation, alignment and partnership. An increase in the Spanish involvement is thus expected in multilateral programmes and actions,³ as well as deeper bilateral commitments by means of new instruments, such as direct budget support or sectoral approaches.

Contributing to Democracy Consolidation, Respect for Human Rights, Peace and Security

The concept of democracy, peace and security as used by the Plan is consistent with that used by the current hegemonic actors and is framed within the current trends emphasising the links between security and development, although these may be considered from different perspectives. In basic terms, democratisation refers to formal aspects and, to a lesser extent, to the strengthening of public policies and the participation of the African communities and citizenship. Also, the perception of the armed conflicts in the continent pushes to the background the structural causes and the responsibility of external actors for these conflicts, and sets the basis for a security approach that is more reactive than preventive.

Instead of military assistance, actions such as the involvement of electoral observers; the sending of military forces for peace operations; measures to reduce the official arms trade and to fight illegal arms trade; the involvement of civil observation brigades for peace; or the strong promotion of direct, participative, African and decentralised democracy experiences, which are taking place in African countries, may stand as more creative and innovative measures to advance on the goal of consolidating democracy, peace and security in Africa.

Fight against Poverty and Contribution to the African Development Agenda

With this line of action, the Spanish government is seeking coherence among the new development agenda for Africa, the new international consensus of the fight against poverty and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the framework outlined by the MAEC's Master Plan for Development Cooperation. However, and contrary to the provisions of the Master Plan, it should be noted that the Plan Africa pushes to the background very important questions, such as the high priority of the aid destined to Less Advanced Countries and to sectors more sensitive to achieve sustainable human development (health, education, gender, environmental sustainability), while placing a special emphasis on the use of financial facilities and resources to defend Spanish investments and commercial interests, migration control and the fight against terrorism.

Furthermore, the amount of aid and monitoring mechanisms of the different programmes⁴ are subject to the preparation in the future of a number of sectoral

² The specific weight of non-governmental development cooperation through development NGOs decreases, in line with the Master Plan, although the total sums are likely to increase.

³ Multilateralism is assumed as a value in itself, but this will depend on the type of multilateral institutions being promoted. From the perspective of the development of the continent, issues of whether the prioritisation of organisations such as the broadly criticised World Bank, or of controversial initiatives, such as the creation of the Global Health Fund, are preferable instead of an active support to the agencies of the United Nations, should be discussed.

⁴ We refer to: Initiative Against Hunger and Poverty, Education for All – Fast Track, Heritage Development Programme, VITA Cooperation Programme for Health Development in Africa, NAUTA programme, Micro-credits Concession Fund, HIPC debt cancellation and bilateral initiatives (debt cancellation in exchange of financial support to the education sector and cancellation of multilateral debt through the MDRI initiative), commitments from the Meetings of Spanish and African women 'For a Better World', public funding of development NGOs in Africa 2006 and United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund.

strategies (food sovereignty and fight against hunger, water and sanitation, humanitarian action) and the future decisions of the MAEC. The lack of details regarding some action sub-lines may also be criticised (for instance, the fight against desertification and the protection of the environment), as may be the insistence on DAF credits⁵ (credit instrument) for financing infrastructure and production-based projects, when the recommendations of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the EU insist on the reduction of 'linked' aid.

The different goals of the Plan Africa and of the EU's Strategy for Africa that tries to establish an MDG-oriented Euro-African Pact should also be mentioned. In the case of the Spanish Plan for Africa, the fight against poverty and the compliance with the MDGs is simply another goal, such as cooperation to appropriately regulate migratory fluxes or economic exchanges, and the promotion of investments. In any case, and from our point of view, in order to advance in the human development path in Africa, a consensus on the fight against poverty is not enough if it fails to look more closely at rights, equality, social justice and redistribution.

Promoting Cooperation to Appropriately Regulate Migratory Fluxes

The swift elaboration and approval of this Plan seems to be mainly based on the migratory question. As the headline suggests, the Plan defines specific goals and measures to line up the migratory policies and migratory fluxes of partner countries with Spanish concerns and interests. In this sense, it may be said that the new framework agreements on migratory cooperation with several African countries establish a new type of conditionality that promises an increase in aid and investments in exchange for collaboration in the repatriation of 'illegal emigrants', or a better control in their countries of origin to avoid their leaving the country. The regulation and channelling of legal immigration and co-development measures in a broader sense have an irrelevant place in the Plan,⁶ when compared to the administrative, police and judicial control related to the fight against illegal immigration.

This approach is not consistent with the joint EU-Africa strategy, the Global Approach to Migration approved by the European Council⁷ and the Euro-African Regional Conference on Migration and Development held in Rabat in July 2006. Aside from the control of migratory fluxes, these European initiatives try to provide coherent migration and development policies and insist on other goals and lines of action regarding development cooperation and co-development. In other words, the Plan Africa of the Spanish government deals with the migratory question from a more biased perspective than that of the Global Approach to Migration of the EU and the recently approved policy for development known as 'The European Consensus'. These EU policies, apart from arranging work-related migration, propose a deeper focus on other goals and lines of action, such as local development programmes in the countries of origin, reversing 'brain drain', improvement of remittance transfers, enhancement of international asylum

⁵ Development Assistance Fund.

⁶ The Plan barely contains a note regarding the Co-development Consensus Document prepared by the Development Cooperation Council. For instance, the support to local economic development programmes proposed by the communities themselves or the financing of training programmes in the countries of origin may also be considered as interesting initiatives for migratory cooperation.

⁷ The European Council recently adopted a *Global Approach to Migration* (European Council, December 15, 2005) where it is provided that the AENEAS programme, the framework programme for solidarity and management of migratory fluxes for 2007-2012, and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument should include new financial assignments to face migratory pressure, but also the synergies between migration and development.

protection and the role of immigrants in the development processes of the host societies.

Lastly, it is also worth mentioning that with the importance given by the Spanish government to controlling migratory fluxes, the relevance of the regional group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has grown to the detriment of other regional integration projects in the continent, since, after the Maghreb, this part of the African continent holds the main countries of origin of most of the migratory fluxes to Spain.

Active Participation in the Development of the EU's Strategy for Africa

The main foreseen measure consists in increasing the number of Spanish officials in the European institutions, but also specially to monitor certain EU objectives and initiatives.⁸ However, apart from the aforementioned imbalances between the EU and Spain within the scope of the migratory cooperation and the fight against poverty, the Spanish Plan for Africa also fails to be consistent with its trade policy. The Spanish government fails to clearly state its stance in the current debate after the execution of the Cotonou Agreement in the post-Lome era for the creation of free trade areas between the EU and African regional groups under the denomination of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the fair allocation of costs and benefits related to the commercial integration of economies of different levels of development, in the absence of compensation or re-distribution instruments. In sum, it may be said that certain imbalance is observed between the concern to implement a series of specific actions to guarantee Spanish involvement in policy design and in the European institutions which have a relationship with Africa, and the Spanish interest to implement its own foreign policy for the African continent.

Promotion of Trade and Investment Exchange. Special Focus on Fisheries and Energy Relationships

In this sense, there is a will to give continuity to the financial instruments supporting trade and investments (DAF, FEV, COFIDEX, ARPPI, EFP lines) to keep promoting Spanish presence in Africa, especially in the hydrocarbon and fisheries sectors. Not taking into account the specific results of this support in terms of local economic development, the principle used as a starting point is that the defence of Spanish economic and trade interests is not incompatible with African development and that this relationship is always beneficial to African economies.

As the experience of Spanish companies in Latin America reveals, the performance requirements, that is, the conditions that governments may apply to foreign capital with the purpose of boosting the advantages of foreign investments in local economies, are a key element for better benefits in terms of development for the recipient economies. As it is well known, the current neo-liberal logic, far from imposing conditions on the entry and establishment of foreign capital, leads Southern governments to opt for a model of openness to transnational companies that includes granting all manner of facilities, often out of proportion. Likewise, the increase of trade fluxes need not be construed in terms of automatic advantages for African economies, since the evolution of African exports, the imbalance in the trade figures, and the level of diversification of the economies, or the dependence of a few primary-sector products on exports, are also factors to be considered.

⁸ Amongst them: African Peace Facility; increase of ODA and the European development funds (EDF) for African countries; compliance with the commitments for the alleviation of debt acquired within the European framework; special focus on fisheries policies, insofar as it is of European competence; influence on the European doctrine for migratory fluxes; and the active involvement in the achievement of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

From the standpoint of African development and Spanish development cooperation, the few references and measures aimed at providing consistency between development policies and Spanish economic relations with African countries are striking, as well as the scarce involvement in multilateral initiatives that explore the synergies between development and trade.

Strengthening Cultural and Scientific Cooperation

Together with a strengthening of the activities carried out by *Instituto Cervantes* for the promotion of the Spanish language in African countries, the main novelty is the creation of *Casa África* (Africa House) as a new instrument for diplomatic action and an open space for African and Spanish civil societies. This could be regarded positively, since new cultural and scientific initiatives may be put into practice from this new institution, thus diversifying the currently excessive centralisation of the objective of promoting the Spanish language in the African continent. However, it may also bring about duplicities and confusions, insofar as the goals and actions to be developed by the different institutions charged with cultural and scientific cooperation with Africa are not specified (MAEC-AECI, *Fundación Carolina*, *Instituto Cervantes* and now, *Casa África*).

The Plan also lacks specific lines of action for Spain to learn and benefit from cultural exchanges with African countries (for instance, specific measures to promote African languages in Spain) and a reflection on the possibility to capitalise on the potential of African identities and cultures in favour of development, peace, democracy and human rights.

Reinforcement of Spanish Political and Institutional Presence in Africa

The Plan Africa also prioritises an increase of the material and personal means used by Spanish actions in Africa to maintain a more fluent dialogue. For such purposes, it contemplates an institutional deployment of the state's administration, the promotion of Spain's influence and presence in International Organisations (IOs) linked to Africa, and a reinforcement of the political and social dialogue through official trips and meetings. Upon reviewing the proposed specific measures to achieve this objective (new embassies, offices for technical cooperation, special agencies, understandings, cooperation framework agreements, mixed commissions, the Board for Africa,⁹ an action plan for the promotion of professionals in IOs), these seem to be more oriented towards policies based on Spanish interests in Africa (regarding trade, investors, energy security, geo-strategic), rather than towards international cooperation and the development of the continent.

Geographical Priorities

Firstly, it should be noted that the approach to the EU-AFRICA strategy is to consider the continent as a whole (North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa), whereas the Plan Africa of the Spanish government is targeted at Sub-Saharan Africa only. In the future, this fact may damage the convergence of goals and the implementation of actions in the framework of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, the Global Approach to Migration, the European Consensus and other EU initiatives.

The Plan contains specific action notes for priority countries (Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Nigeria, Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Ethiopia and Mauritania), specially monitored countries (Chad, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Zimbabwe) and priority regional organisations (African Union and the Economic Community of Western Africa States).¹⁰ By looking

⁹ *Mesa de África*.

¹⁰ The geographical priority is based on economic and trade links (Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and Nigeria), historical links (Equatorial Guinea) and migratory flux regulation links (Senegal, Mali and

at this list of countries, doubts arise about the importance given to the fight against poverty as a determining factor. Indeed, it seems that it is economic interests (especially in terms of fisheries and energy) and their strategic relevance, as countries of transit and origin of immigration fluxes that really determine the status of a country as a priority interest country or a special monitoring country.¹¹

It should also be underlined that there is an inconsistency in the classification of geographical priorities in the Spanish Master Plan for Development Cooperation for the period 2005-2008, since it differentiates between priority countries, countries under a special focus and preferential countries. The list of countries is also inconsistent.¹² This may lead to confusions and conflicts in the future planning of foreign policy and development cooperation actions, both within the Spanish administration itself and with the different partners.

The Model for Development Cooperation Established by the Plan Africa

As outlined in FRIDE's background document, there is no doubt that the Spanish Plan may be regarded as an honest plan, inasmuch as it makes an effort to bring a set of ethical and solidarity principles and its own interests together, not trying to hide the latter. The Spanish government has further sought to come up with new innovative and interesting ideas, such as the 'Alliance of Civilisations', an 'effective multilateralism' and the 'South-South cooperation' (Latin America – Africa).

However, another issue for debate is the development cooperation model that inspires the actions proposed by the Plan, in other words, what the Spanish government means by promoting development in Africa and what model it considers to be the most appropriate to cooperate with the different actors in the continent.

Considering what has been analysed so far, it can be said that the Plan Africa has to be regarded within the new predominant paradigm that seeks to transcend the 'old' neo-liberal orthodoxy of the Washington Consensus and that of the Structural Adjustment Policies with a universal character, and favours a 'new consensus' focused on the MDGs and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Thus, the Spanish Plan supports this new model of association between donors (EU, Spain) that engage to coordinate themselves (harmonisation) and match their aid to the political agenda of African countries (alignment), while the African recipient (or partner) engages to conduct development processes (appropriation) based on a policy of results oriented towards achieving the objectives of the fight against poverty.

This 'new orthodoxy' or 'metanarrative', as has been called by Maxwell (2005), may be questioned in that it fails to take into consideration the critiques to neoliberal recipes and the fact that partners tend to be accountable only to the donors' satisfaction. Therefore, many specific programmes or initiatives are still being imposed by donors under an apparent dialogue with African governments, where

Mauritania). Ethiopia and Kenya also occupy a relevant position because they are multilateral diplomatic centres.

¹¹ For example, in the notes on Nigeria, no measure to fight against poverty is observed; by analysing those regarding Namibia, it is observed that this is a clear example where fisheries and trade interests determine the cooperation relationship with the country. On the other hand, in the case of Mozambique, the main reasons behind Spanish foreign action are justified in terms of the fight against poverty.

¹² By comparing the Master Plan and the Plan Africa, it is observed that countries, such as Mali, Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritania, Chad, Ivory Coast and Zimbabwe have not been included in the Master Plan, and that countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia and South Africa, which are considered priority states in the Plan Africa, are regarded as countries under special focus or preferential countries in the Master Plan. Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe, regarded as special attention countries in the Master Plan are not included in the priorities of the Spanish government in the Plan Africa.

the latter tell the former what they want to hear and where the outcome is often far from the real needs of the citizens and the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process.

In sum, it may be argued that the basis for Spanish foreign action and development cooperation in the African continent gives prominence to political, economic and strategic interests. In other words, the Plan Africa spares little room for alternatives based on an emancipating discourse on Human Development, a new transcultural conception of Human Rights and a new conception of the cosmopolitan cooperation led by the world networks of NGOs, syndicates and civil societies in general, in interaction with other development cooperation actors, and inspired in the idea of complementation and dialogue on equal terms.

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Foroaod - La Ayuda española al desarrollo

FRIDE ha llevado a cabo el proyecto "La Ayuda española al desarrollo - Balance a mitad de Legislatura y propuesta para una consulta participativa" entre Junio 2006 y Abril 2007. Este proyecto apuesta por la elaboración de un proceso consultivo sobre la política de cooperación del actual Ejecutivo español. Hemos creado un espacio participativo de estudio y debate, en el que se analizó la consecución de la agenda de reforma de la cooperación española y se identificaron los principales avances y obstáculos en la operacionalización de las iniciativas, basadas en el principio de "más ayuda, mejor ayuda". Se elaboró, de forma participativa, una guía de recomendaciones para transformar las aspiraciones de la cooperación española en realidades.

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