

**Strengthening Science and Technology Policy Dialogue between  
Africa and Europe: Understanding a busy landscape and  
leveraging new opportunities**

Daan du Toit\*

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The following research note was prepared as part of an ongoing work for the FP7 CAAST-Net (Network for the Coordination and Advancement of Sub-Saharan Africa-EU Science & Technology Cooperation) project. CAAST-Net is one of the so-called FP7 INCO-Nets, instruments designed to enhance the EU's S&T cooperation with different international partner regions, notably by undertaking actions such as the identification of R&D priorities ideally suited for cooperation between the EU and the region concerned, and supporting S&T policy exchanges. The CAAST-Net consortium consists of 18 major African and European S&T organizations, including several government ministries, and is therefore well-placed to support the further evolution of the Africa-EU S&T policy dialogue, through providing background policy analysis and other support services.

From the last quarter of 2009, CAAST-Net will convene a series of S&T stakeholder forums to encourage a broader (i.e. beyond intergovernmental forums) African-EU S&T policy debate around a series of key issues of research and development. The EU has allocated 63 million Euros to encourage EU-Africa research partnership.

Science and technology (S&T) cooperation between Europe and Africa at present arguably enjoys unprecedented political attention. This situation can be ascribed to the sustained global focus on supporting African development, in forums of the United Nations, G8, and others;

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\* Minister Counsellor (Science and Technology), Senior S&T Representative to the EU, South African Mission to the European Union (South African Department of Science and Technology), Rue Montoyer 17-19 B-1000 Brussels.

and also the recognition of the critical role that S&T can play in fighting poverty. In recent years, there has been increasing S&T cooperation between Africa and the European Union (EU). The Africa-EU Joint Strategy adopted at the 2007 Africa-EU Summit in Lisbon for example includes a dedicated Science, Information Society and Space Partnership (the so-called 8th Partnership). The implementation of this partnership has, among other outcomes, resulted in new funding opportunities such as the EU Seventh Framework Programme's (FP7) "Coordinated Call for Africa" supporting African-European research cooperation in areas such as food, agriculture, health, land and water resources.

There is therefore now considerable momentum shaping the bi-regional S&T landscape, and a number of new opportunities for African and European researchers to cooperate. It is, however, important for this cooperation to be complemented by an intensified Africa-European S&T policy dialogue. Within this context, S&T policy dialogue can be considered as the engagement between policy and decision-makers on their respective policies and S&T priorities. The objective is to foster a better understanding of the processes in order to achieve a policy consensus on shared S&T challenges, including the identification of new initiatives for mutually-beneficial research cooperation. Mutual S&T policy learning is also an important part of the process. Policy dialogue is also important, not only to improve the overall enabling environment for research collaboration, but also to link S&T partnerships with political, economic and development cooperation. This will ensure the translation and take-up of research results to support economic growth, social development and other policy programmes.

Prerequisites for a policy dialogue to be effective include not only the involvement of participants with appropriate policy mandates, but also a strongly shared commitment to the process and expectation of its outcomes. The policy dialogue should also be aligned with and embedded within the existing inter-governmental frameworks for cooperation. Within the international S&T cooperation context, a policy dialogue could, for example, interrogate research and innovation responses to pressing global challenges such as climate change, food security, communicable diseases or energy security. It could also constitute a valuable platform for multilateral deliberations on S&T policy issues such as ethics and research, researcher mobility, "brain circulation", the establishment and funding of global research infrastructures, and the international management of intellectual property rights. There are plentiful examples of where the EU's S&T cooperation with international

partner regions have been enriched through a strong S&T policy dialogue. These include S&T ministerial forums convened with Asia, and the specific joint steering platforms established with the EU's partner countries in the Mediterranean and Western Balkan regions.

The Africa-EU Joint Expert Group tasked with the implementation of the 8th Partnership is also considering how to initiate a policy dialogue to enhance Africa-EU S&T cooperation. The challenge in establishing such a dialogue is to identify or establish a forum, consistent with the principles elaborated above, which would not duplicate, but complement existing bodies and processes. It should for example be borne in mind that a formal intergovernmental framework for the implementation of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy is provided by the governance mechanisms agreed at the Lisbon Summit (including the Summits, Troika ministerial meetings, and the Joint Expert Groups). There is also regular and fruitful contact at the "services" level between the African Union and European Commissions. Furthermore, in Africa, the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), and in Europe the "Competitiveness Council", represent the highest S&T policy-making organs, and these bodies from time to time, engage with international partners through different modalities as and when appropriate .

Whilst a future Africa-EU S&T policy dialogue platform would have to be linked to the Joint Expert Group mechanism, there may be a need for establishing a separate forum. Of course there are existing vibrant Africa-EU S&T policy contacts, taking place at multiple levels and involving different stakeholders, which would also have to be taken into account. Thus, the new platform would have to find its niche among a series of existing dialogues.

To facilitate such a new platform, this note outlines eight different spheres of S&T policy contact between Africa and the EU:

- S&T policy exchange conducted in the formal intergovernmental forums forming part of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy governance framework: this exchange, referred to above, is an engagement steadily gaining in momentum with the implementation of the Science, Information Society and Space Partnership;
- Policy dialogues between Africa's Regional Economic Communities and the EU: within the ambit of their structured development cooperation partnerships, these dialogues increasingly, as for example evidenced by the case of the Southern African Development Community, start to have an interface with S&T policy. However, these are not yet intense engagements;

- Deliberations within the joint forums of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the EU: Although there has not been a new formal S&T engagement since the 2002 ACP-EU Forum on Research for Sustainable Development, the new ACP S&T Programme will, however, undoubtedly rekindle this engagement;
- Africa-EU S&T policy contact within multilateral forums, chiefly those of the United Nations, such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), including global S&T partnerships on specific themes (e.g. International Panel on Climate Change) or in partnership forums in which both parties participate, e.g. the G8;
- Bilaterally, between an African country and the EU (e.g. those African countries such as South Africa, which have an S&T cooperation agreement with the EU);
- Bilaterally between an African country and EU Member States: There is rich and varied array of bilateral S&T collaborations between African and European states;
- African participations in the FP7: These enable a S&T policy exchange between Africa and Europe (at the level of the participating researchers), whilst the project outcomes provide S&T advice for policy- and decision-making; and
- Regular discussions within global scientific forums, for example of the International Council for Science (ICSU), between African and European researchers, which serve to highlight important policy issues for governments' attention – here the important work of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Science and Technology Office should be highlighted, there are several NEPAD S&T thematic networks engaging in partnerships with Europe.

The above engagements of course need to be further elaborated and analysed but they are indicative of the rich portfolio of existing engagements, which could support, and on which a new Africa-EU S&T policy platform could be established.