

# GENERAL CONCLUSIONS



## AFRO **DIASPORA(S)** AND AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY

**Building bridges between Africa and Spain**

May 9 and 10, 2024 | Madrid

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## INTRODUCTION

On May 9 and 10, the meeting “Afrodiaspora(s) and African Civil Society: Building bridges between Africa and Spain” took place at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAEUEC). It was co-organized by the MAEUEC, the International Organization for Migration, the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration (MISSM), and Casa África, with the collaboration of the organization África Activa, and the Women for Africa Foundation.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent. The aim of this meeting was contributing to the visibility of the contributions made by these communities both in Spain and abroad, without ignoring the analysis of the challenges they face.

These conferences have offered a space for reflection and debate in which key actors from the African diaspora and the Afro-descendant community in Spain have participated. Additionally, both Spanish and African associations and experts from countries such as South Africa, Angola, Senegal, Nigeria, and Mali were invited to the debate.

On the first day of the meeting we were able to analyze the economic, academic, and cultural contribution of the African diaspora to the development and plurality of society, through four roundtables that addressed associations and their contribution to social dialogue, development agendas, education and talent. On the second day, two roundtables addressed Spain's foreign policy towards Africa from the point of view of experts and participating associations of the African continent and of the Afro-Spanish community ; in the perspective of developing a new strategic framework for the partnership with Africa.

Below we can find the main conclusions drawn from the six roundtables of the meeting. These conclusions and proposals have been extracted from the positions expressed by the participants during the dialogues held throughout the two days.

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## ROUNDTABLE 1: Associations of the African diaspora in Spain: Harnessing the opportunities of diversity



**Moderated by:** María Jesús Herrera, Chief of Mission of the International Organization for Migration in Spain

### Participants

- **Beatrice Grace Alouch Obado**, President of the Spanish section of África 2.0.
- **Marina García Albertos**, Secretary of the Federation of African Associations of Murcia
- **Abdou Mawa Ndiaye**, President of the Coordination of Senegalese Associations of Catalonia
- **Teodoro Bondyale**, Secretary of the Federation of Associations of Africans in the Canary Islands

**Subject:** Getting a better understanding of the associative fabric of African civil society in Spain and its diversity, in order to know how to enhance its assets in different priority areas; identifying the advances and achievements of these associations and highlighting the mutual solidarity and support of the African and Afro-descendant diaspora.

### Conclusions

- The role of migrants and the communities that make up the diaspora in society is fundamental thanks to their different voices and their contributions, both human and economic, to the countries in which they live and from which they come.
- Associationism strengthens civil society and helps catalyzing leadership, giving voice and demanding equal opportunities, participation, symmetry and a necessary change in outlook.
- It is necessary to involve the diaspora in the development, design and implementation of public policies, in order to address the lack of administrative regularity and the problems they face in making their aspiration a reality.

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- The associations should not be perceived as associations of migrants but of citizens; for which comprehensive migration management and a horizontal and equal relationship must be promoted.
- The involvement of the diaspora as a development agent in the design and implementation of policies is necessary. It is important for knowledge to be transferred to the countries of origin, with a special focus on youth, in whom lies the future of Africa.
- Associations are meant to play an important role in the fight against racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. Countries should be encouraged to continue to strengthen the protection and rights of migrants and diasporas, the access to health and education, security and well-being, to fight against all forms of discrimination (social, economic and cultural).
- Associations are key actors in building an interconnected world and strengthening ties between countries of origin, transit and destination, from a comprehensive and global equality angle. Diasporas and transnational communities play an increasingly relevant role on the local scene.
- The human rights of migrants and the prosperity and well-being of communities must be at the center of all actions. In this sense, we must continue to develop integrative and transformative approaches, considering the specificities of different groups, such as age, gender, religion, language and culture, among others. We must promote diversity and inclusion and leave no one behind.
- The diaspora must be recognized as an strategic actor that contributes to accelerating the achievement of sustainable development in the countries of origin, framed in the 2030 Agenda. We must give visibility to their impact and contribution both in their countries of residence and in their countries of origin. To achieve this, it is necessary to establish new channels and ways to promote and recognize their work, seeking to strengthen ties with governments located at both ends of the migration cycle, in order to study how diasporas can have an impact their countries of origin.

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## ROUNDTABLE 2: Building a plural society: African diaspora and community of people of African descent leading social dialogue



**Moderated by:** Karoline Fernández de la Hoz, Director of the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia, Ministry for Inclusion, Social Security and Migration

### Participants

- **Guillermo Ponce Morales**, President of the Afro-Hispanics Association
- **Isabelle Mamadou**, Coordinator of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent Implementation Team in Spain
- **Deborah Ekoka Hernandis**, Co-founder of Black Barcelona Encuentro and Conciencia Afro
- **Abdoulaye Fall Diaw**, Expert in migration and founder of Maingate
- **Yiboula Emmanuel Bazié Tapsoba**, Founder and president of the Euro-African International Forum

**Subject:** Valuing the importance of full and equal participation of the African diaspora in Spanish society, contributing to dialogue and social inclusion. Highlighting the current opportunities for synergies between the African diaspora and the Afrodescendant community with key actors in Spain to promote their participation and inclusion.

### Conclusions

- The relations of the Afro-descendant community with key actors in Spain create synergies that help create a better environment for participation.
- The fight against racism must be global, since it is a global problem. The International Decade for People of African Descent, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 and which ends this year, is relevant to this matter. With its motto “Recognition, Justice and Development” the aim was to make the African and Afro-descendant population visible in order to move forward in the construction of a plural society, through the recognition of their contributions to society and the importance of preserving their cultural heritage. In this sense, the role of associations and, especially, international organizations in disseminating these values is crucial.

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- It is necessary to approve the new decade 2025-2034, which will be oriented towards the acknowledgement of slavery. At the same time, we encourage Spain to vote in favor of the new decade in the UN General Assembly, and to help in the creation of a fund for people of African descent.
- The work carried out by people of African descent in their places of residence is important to remind the history of the African continent and not forget the difficulties they have gone through. The Afrodiaspora is considered to be the sixth region of Africa, and has a great role in the development of the continent.
- Education is a very important tool to improve the visibility of the African population in Spain. African history and literature must be taught in schools, and should be have a better recognition. The Afrodiaspora is part of this fight to remember their ancestors. It is important to identify and highlight examples of the diaspora, not only for the people of African descent to increase their feeling of belonging, but to create greater diversity in our society and promote coexistence.
- African and Afro-descendant people are underrepresented in many areas of society, especially in skilled jobs and higher education. This is because they often encounter barriers that prevent them from accessing these positions, such as the difficulty in validating their degrees. These barriers hinder the regularization process, making their integration into Spanish society difficult. All of this involves both the country of origin and of destination, which is why the regulation and coordination of consulates is urgent to ease these migration processes.
- More mechanisms are needed to facilitate the integration of African and Afrodescendant people into Spanish society. A solution could be the integration of these migrants in areas of the so-called “emptied Spain” where depopulation is a big problem. Here, the role of the local and regional administration is crucial, which would also benefit from greater cultural wealth among their population.
- The creation of a State Council of the Afro-descendant Community was proposed to coordinate the implementation of legal measures against racism. One of the main challenges that still needs to be addressed is to work from a structural approach to directly attack the root causes of the problem. Although the fight to eliminate racism is not an easy path, if all actors in international society work together, great objectives can be achieved.

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### ROUNDTABLE 3: Contributions of the African diaspora and of the community of people of African descent to development agendas



**Moderated by:** Jorge Romeu, Deputy Director General, Office of Migration Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs European Union and Cooperation

#### Participants:

- **Gonzalo Vega**, Head of the Sub-Saharan Africa Cooperation Department of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)
- **Jesús Jiménez**, Coordinator of the Working Group for Africa of the Spanish Exporters and Investors Club
- **Ermias Mebrate Mengistu**, Director of IESE Business School's Africa Initiative
- **Divaika Kiamba Dina**, President of the Euro Africa Center and coordinator for Africa at the consulting firm Adminex Group.
- **Sampson Kwarkye**, Project Director in the West African Littoral States Section at the Institute for Security Studies (Senegal)

**Subject:** Promoting general knowledge of the key role that transnational communities play in strengthening economic and commercial links with countries on the African continent; as well as addressing the accelerating power of sustainable development that diasporas have, framed in the United Nations Agenda 2030 or Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

#### Conclusions

- The role played by the diaspora in strengthening economic and commercial ties with African countries is fundamental. They have a huge impact on inclusive growth, sustainable development and security, both in Africa and Europe.
- The diaspora contributes effectively to the development of their countries of origin. Their return is key not only because of the financial resources provided through remittances but also because of the knowledge, experiences and connections that drive economic growth and innovation. However, this contribution can also be made from abroad (e.g. from key positions in international financial institutions).

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- It is necessary to involve the financial sector in public-private projects addressing the financing needs of African countries; especially in infrastructure and security projects, key for development in Africa.
- It is urgent to provide Africa with strategic consulting and advisory services in different areas: from human security, in its broadest sense, to real estate investment, including sectors such as taxation.
- It is important to invest in the talent and training of young people, understanding that they not only demand development programs but also access to investment and exchange of experiences; as well as public-private initiatives that allow their active participation in the economy and society.

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## ROUNDTABLE 4: Voices of the African diaspora in the knowledge society and in the sharing of talent



**Moderated by:** Patricia Rocu Gómez, Ph.D. and professor at the Complutense University of Madrid

### Participants

- **Jose Francisco Gómez Sánchez**, Director of the Complutense African School
- **Sonia Mankongo**, Director of the Education Plan of the NGO Zerca y Lejos
- **Teresa Langle de Paz**, Director General of the Women for Africa Foundation
- **Justo Bolekia Boleká**, Philologist, novelist and poet
- **Juan Jaime Martínez**, Head of Division for Culture and Education of Casa África

**Subject:** Reviewing existing skills transfer and circular migration programs, the articulation of safe migration channels for educational and professional purposes and the exchange of experience and training in a sustainable and responsible manner, highlighting the fundamental role that youth plays. Highlighting how African diasporas play an economic, political and social driving role in their countries of origin through the transmission of educational, cultural knowledge and experience acquired in their host societies.

### Conclusions

- The contributions generated from civil society must be valued in the development of projects that promote the exchange of knowledge between Africa and the diaspora. These must always include the voices of the protagonists, who must play a relevant role in their design and development.
- Although the diaspora is normally perceived as a tool to help the development of Africa from the outside, it is, in fact, an actor itself, and must be treated with the deserved respect. They must have the necessary instruments to develop their projects, which is the responsibility of both local and national authorities. Work must be done with them and for them.

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- People of African descent create cultural networks, sharing their own experiences and integrating into our society. However, the existing barriers in the recognition of degrees, among others, mean that they have less access to higher education, and they end up being underrepresented.
- There is a need to give more visibility to African academic and research knowledge. The history of Africa should be taught in Spanish schools, not only as a way of cultural exchange, but to better understand the continent's past and where its traditions come from.
- University networks constitute the vanguard of academic relations worldwide. These are crucial transmitters of knowledge between cultures, so they must have enough resources to facilitate multilateral exchanges.
- A feminist approach must be adopted when promoting the visibility of people of African descent. African women play a great role in the economic, social and cultural development of their countries.
- When talking about the diaspora, one cannot ignore how gender affects the different experiences of migrants. The central role of women in the African economy must be recognized, as well as their contribution to the export of African culture abroad. There is a lack of explicit recognition of women's contributions to African cultures throughout history, and this is something that must be improved through cultural and knowledge exchanges.

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## ROUNDTABLE 5: The diaspora on Spain's agenda: An inclusive foreign policy



**Moderated by:** **Alberto Virella**, Advisory Member for the Directorate General of Sustainable Development Policies, former Ambassador to Senegal and Ambassador at Large for the Plan África, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation.

### Participants:

- **Saiba Bayo**, Professor at Pompeu Fabra University
- **Roméo Gbaguidi**, Director of LemAfriQ
- **Nicole Ndongala**, President of the Karibu Association
- **Viviane Ogou**, President of the Puerta de África Association
- **Simón Nong**, President of África Activa

**Subject:** Listening to the perceptions and proposals of the African and Afro-descendant communities in relation to Spain's foreign policy towards Africa, so that their knowledge and criteria can be effectively integrated into the construction of a genuine partnership with African governments and people.

### Conclusions:

- The qualities and knowledge of the representatives of the Afrodiaspora in Spain are useful to different actors in their projection and action in Africa: companies, NGOs, those in the fields of culture, academia or universities; and for the Government itself. The Afrodiaspora is made of men, women and young people with very diverse characteristics: knowledge of African languages, qualities as intercultural facilitators, specialized academic training...
- Companies would benefit from the support of Afro-Spanish people who master both idiosyncrasies to transmit security, trust and negotiation skills. A special sector is tourism in Africa, since people from the Afrodiaspora can open doors to areas outside the conventional European tourism.

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- Spain would gain credibility if it made visible, both internally and externally, the multiethnic reality of its society, with the incorporation of Afro-Spanish people into the General Administration of the State, in particular, into its diplomatic career.
- In Spain, the points of view of the African diaspora are not taken sufficiently into account, perhaps due to the undervaluation of their capabilities and knowledge, even though they may have been trained in Spain. In fact, one can speak of invisibilization, as their contributions are only recognized in very limited areas (e.g., Professor Mbuy Kabunda directed for years the master's degree in African studies at the Complutense University of Madrid).
- The Africa Table (Mesa África : an advisory body of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation) is a platform in which the Afrodiaspora has the possibility to participate, and which gives the opportunity to interact with and listen to the different Government/ State bodies and civil society. However, permanent participatory processes must be established, using digital tools.
- Afrodiaspora associations can be effective agents in the actions and activities of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).
- Before developing a new strategic framework, it is necessary to study and identify the cognitive biases that can have an impact, consciously or unconsciously, when establishing a relationship with the African continent and, by extension, with the African men and women. It is important for the external action to begin with internal initiatives, so that the outlook towards Africa and Africans changes. We must replicate and expand the good examples in the educational field that give visibility to the complexity and sociocultural richness of Africa and increase mutual understanding (as Casa África has been doing with the educational centers in the Canary Islands).
- In regards to the participation of the Afrodiaspora in both external and in internal actions, we must take into consideration their demand to be recognized with a differentiated identity within civil society, without this necessarily implying the adoption of specific measures, or positive discrimination policies.
- Europe has written history from its point of view and has ended up shaping it as the only true history of the world; this eurocentric perspective must be overcome, so that Europeans and Africans can write history together. Along these lines, the role of African researchers must be reinforced so that their analyzes and proposals are available to the public.

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- Spain must have its own agenda with Africa. Having an agenda in line with its national interest is not incompatible with responding to Africa's demands and priorities. Some requests that come from Africa may also be foreign policy priorities when they benefit Spain in the short and long term ("win-win"). Likewise, the EU's policies towards Africa must be analyzed as they may not favor Spain's interests.
- The creation, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of the figure of Special Envoy for African Youth (in the diaspora and in Africa) should be considered.

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## ROUNDTABLE 6: Spain's foreign policy with respect to African civil society



**Moderated by: Antonio Sánchez-Benedito Gaspar**, Ambassador at Large for the Sahel and the Plan África, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation.

### Participants

- **Adeyinka Adewale**, Professor at Henley Business School (United Kingdom)
- **Sérgio Calundungo**, Researcher at the Research Center of the Catholic University of Angola, Coordinator of the Political and Social Observatory of Angola and Vice President for Africa of the Sherwood international platform (Angola)
- **Bakary Sambe**, Executive Director of the Timbuktu Institute, African Center for Peace Studies (Senegal)
- **Fonteh Akum**, Director of the Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)
- **Aly Toumkara**, Executive Director of the Centre des Études Sécuritaires et Stratégiques au Sahel, CE3S (Mali)

**Subject:** Inviting African civil society to formulate proposals and make observations in relation to Spain's foreign policy towards the continent.

### Conclusions:

- Spain must decide the level of autonomy to which it aspires, in its policy towards Africa, in relation to the European Union.
- Our government must be able to adopt initiatives of continental scope without neglecting the unique challenges that each country faces.
- Ours is a mixed country with an African dimension, which is a strength.

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- There are four crucial elements that determine the “African agenda”:
  - Although Africa appears as “the continent of the future”, its present cannot be ignored: out of the 10 countries with the highest growth rate, at least seven are African.
  - From a demographic point of view, with a very young and constantly increasing population, the continent has undergone a rapid transformation. This tradition is being positively supported by the investments in education that African leaders are beginning to prioritize: the young African population is increasingly better qualified.
  - Agriculture, with an enormous barely exploited potential, is a differential factor that contributes to Africa's progress.
  - Finally, it is important to highlight the role of African countries in peacekeeping: they represent 75% of the forces of the peace missions deployed on the continent.
  
- We must listen to the Afro-descendant population that lives in our territory, who sometimes seems forgotten. The Afrodiaspora must be a helpful, valuable and accessible tool to strengthen ties with the African continent and its civil society.
  
- Geographically, being the closest country to the African continent, Spain must act as a bridge between Europe and Africa.
  
- Young Africans are experiencing frustration due to the discrimination they face in a globalized world. In this context, Spain should not play the role of Europe's wall.
  
- Our societies must join forces to move forward, from a mutual ground of recognition and respect for the differences; and adopt a kaleidoscopic vision that takes into account the different perspectives: from Europe to Africa and from Africa to Europe, but also Europe-Europe and Africa-Africa. The Afrodiaspora can help integrate these different perspectives; through an accurate vision of what Africa wants and how we are perceived by the African civilian population.
  
- Africa has its own history. It is necessary to review the historical relations between Europe and Africa and learn from the mistakes made. Without mutual understanding there can be no progress. Europe must abandon the role of “benevolent guardian” and stop treating Africa with paternalism. On the contrary, it must accompany local processes and transfer skills and knowledge (instead of simply lending money).

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- It is important to understand the different individual perspectives of African countries, without approaching them as a whole. “Africa is not a country”, so developing strategies that meet the needs of such a diverse continent – and much less interconnected than Europe – is an almost impossible challenge.
- The focus of the new strategy for Africa must be on implementation. Likewise, it must be based on a clear and transparent definition of the objectives pursued.
- Although the new strategy must be an instrument of public policies, public organizations, NGOs and companies must also contribute to its implementation.

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