

9th November 2015 | African-European summit on migration: Open letter to the african governments

On the occasion of the African-European summit on migration in Valetta, Malta (11th – 12th November 2015) Afrique-Europe-Interact has published an open letter which is mainly adressed to the african governments.

Your honorable ambassadors,
Dear media representatives,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

this letter is addressed to the ambassadors of those African countries who will be present at the African-European Summit on Migration in Valletta. Moreover, we want to address the European public and thus European political institutions. As transnational network with member groups from a number of African and European states, we fear that in Valletta the European Union will yet again attempt to ruthlessly push through its interests – not least of all by relying on its simple economic supremacy. This not only becomes visible through the drafts of the final declaration, which have so far come to light, but also through the corresponding plan of action. More so, as is heard from inside the negotiations, the EU is following an extremely uncompromising course. A high-ranking representative of the African Union reported to the media service “Afroonline”, that already in the pre-negotiations no substantial dialogue has come about: “What we came to see from the EU is a monologue which aims to force their agenda onto us.”

In this respect we would like to call upon the African governments not to agree to any solutions in Valletta which run against the interests of the African population – of which also refugees and migrants are a part, who are on their way to Europe or who are already there. More precisely: African countries should reject the European claim, that the primary aim of the summit in Valletta is to diminish irregular migration, including the readiness to accept or sign comprehensive deportation treaties with the European Union. Accordingly any attempt to tie payments of development aid to the implementation of measures of migration policies (the so called “more-for-more-principle”) has to be rejected. Rather a political course is to be striven for, which respects the fundamental rights of migrants and refugees – particularly in transit states such as Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, in connection with a sustainable development strategy which is based on an economic upturn for the broad population in Africa.

What are the precise plans for Valletta? Four thousand participants, among them heads of state from 35 African states and 28 European countries, are expected at the African-European Summit. This summit is not only planned to be follow-up to the Migration and Mobility Summit in Brussels in April 2014. Also, the previous results of the Rabat Process as well as the Khartoum Process are to be summarized. Both processes are primarily concerned with the control of migration, dictatorial regimes such as Eritrea or Sudan being also part of the negotiations in the Khartoum Process since 2014. Officially five negotiation topics are set up for Valletta, according to the German government: Fighting the causes for flight, legal migration and mobility, international protection and political asylum, combatting human trafficking and human smuggling as well as progresses concerning repatriation and readmission.

Strikingly enough, the European Union signalizes no willingness whatsoever to turn away from its brutally interest-driven political course, which time and again produces the causes for flight that are supposedly sought to be “combatted”. One example of this is the recent demand put forth by the EU, that African states should ratify the highly controversial EPA-Freetrade Agreement (“Economic Partnership Agreements”) by 2017. Despite the fact that this will intensify cut-throat competition amongst African producers, these treaties plan the elimination of

costs barriers for 80% of European products. Needless to say, that the state budgets of many African countries urgently require customs revenues. Similar pattern shows in many other areas, too: driving out local agrarian produce by pushing cheap export goods from the EU to the African market, by pushing the sale of African land to international investors (read: landgrabbing) or the mere fact that Africa loses up to 20 Billion Euro revenues per year through legal and illegal tax trickery by international corporations, to name but a few. In the face of this situation we want to appeal to you, the governments of Africa, to dare to nail your colours to the mast and to only agree to decisions which in fact sustainably improve the situation of your citizens:

- Say No! to any form of politics aiming to seal off borders at the periphery of the EU, which forces refugees and migrants – women and men alike – to dangerous land and sea routes and No! to the increasingly brutal militaristic measures, aiming to hinder people from entering the EU (as for example the operation EUNFVOR at the Libyan coast). Thousands of dead African people are a terrible catastrophe for the involved families, friends and neighbourhoods. The ongoing externalization and hence elimination of refugee protection has to be met with decisive resistance. Huge refugee camps, as planned e.g. in Niger, cannot solve the problem – also because Niger counts as the poorest economy of the world. Instead what is to be expected are catastrophic conditions, as can be witnessed right now in the so-called “hotspots” on Lampedusa, the Greek island of Lesbos or the Serbian border. In this context we also want to appeal to the North-African countries, to refrain from their role as border police for the EU. The terrible scenes at the fences of Melilla and Ceuta or deportations to desert zones trample on the idea of transafrican solidarity. And the same was valid for the dramatic experiences with the camp Choucha at the border between Tunisia and Libya as well (2011-2014).
- Say No! to any form of forced repatriation from Northern Africa or Europe – do not sign any readmission agreement or contracts concerning the acknowledgement of EU-transitpasses (“laisser passer”). The real donors are the female and male migrants, who despite their often very precarious existence, transfer more money to Africa than the whole development aid of industrial countries comprises. The currently offered prospect of doubling the number of legitimate visas – amongst others to African students – is a joke and does not present a real solution for the actual needs of African migrants in terms of adequate education and work conditions.
- Say No! to the multimedia campaigns which the EU wants to carry out in a number of African countries to prevent people from leaving. Neither the dangerous passages, nor racism or the deprivation of rights which influence the situation of migrants and refugees in Europe are an arbitrary fate. More than anything they are the imperatively condemnable result of deliberate policies set out to harass, wear down and exploit people. Relating to this issue, the red card needs to be shown to the cynical, yes racist, differentiation which is currently made between “well-educated” and hence welcomed civil war refugees from Syria and not welcomed “poverty refugees”.
- Say No! to the ratification of the EPA-Freetrade Agreement and to all other economic measures enforced by the EU such as privatization in case of debts or tax exemption for international investors. In relation to this, the 1.8 billion Euro Emergency Aid Trust Fund is to be rejected as mere sham. Contrary to the official line, which claims that with this ridiculously tiny trust it is aimed to stabilize the situation in the Tchad region, at the Horn of Africa and in North Africa, it is planned to combat irregular migration with yet more measures based on security policies.
- Say No! to all conducts which entail corruption, collusion and nepotism as well as bad governance, with which African governments themselves add to the aggravation of the permanent crisis in Africa. In this sense it is up to African institutions such as the AU or the ECOWAS to put pressure on autocratic and violent regimes such as Eritrea, Sudan or

Burundi as their politics have already driven hundreds of thousands of people to flee.

Lastly we would like to appeal to you, the African governments represented in Valletta, to accompany this multi-faceted NO! with a powerful YES!: A Yes, that on one hand aims to reach solidarity and fair settlement of interests between Africa and Europe (systematically taking into account the historical European responsibility for the long-term consequences of slavery, colonialism and climate change) and the realization of free movement as a steadfast human right on the other. It can not be emphasized enough, that it is not possible to control or stop migration and mobility! Instead it should be highlighted that the only effective alternative to sealing borders and deportation consists of unhindered and/or circular migration as it has always been culturally deeply rooted in all regions of Africa for decades and centuries.

Kind regards,
Afrique-Europe-Interact

P.S.: On the occasion of the summit in Valletta, the Malian section of Afrique-Europe-Interact will hold a press conference on Tuesday, 10th November 2015 in Bamako.