

AU-EU SUMMIT OUTCOMES

PLAN INTERNATIONAL ANALYSIS



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PLAN INTERNATIONAL REACTION

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Plan International is a development and humanitarian organisation working to advance children’s rights, with a focus on girls and gender equality. This analysis has been co-authored by the Plan International Offices of the [African Union](#), [European Union](#), [France](#) and [the Netherlands](#).

Much awaited after various challenges, the Summit between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) took place on 17 and 18 of February 2022, along with many uncertainties and expectations. Plan International has been closely following the preparations of the Summit and has been actively engaged in Africa-Europe week, the stakeholders' moment preceding the Summit. We hereby share our reaction and analysis of the Summit outcomes.

“A Joint Vision for 2030”

The [joint vision](#) outlined by African and European leaders in the Summit declaration, emphasizes some shared values, including: “gender equality and women’s empowerment in all spheres of life, the fight against inequalities, support for children’s rights, and the inclusion of women, young people and the most disadvantaged”. We welcome these mentions, however, there is no consideration of **intersectionality** and **diversity** within these groups, no mention of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) which are key to the achievement of gender equality, and **girls** are excluded from the declaration. We acknowledge and welcome that there has been an initial effort to **mainstream gender** in some of the mentioned initiatives and thematics. Additionally, we welcome the recognition of the importance of food security and nutrition, aligned with the AU Theme of the Year 2022.

Despite being positive about many of the priorities reflected in the declaration, we find the **human centered approach** to be weak, if not nonexistent. While young people are mentioned, they are perceived mainly as economic actors. Plan International is a strong advocate for young people’s economic empowerment and our organization supports young people’s transition into the job market through various projects. This is especially relevant within a continent with a large youthful workforce such as Africa. However, children and young people do not exist only as a function of their future contribution to the economy. Seeing them only as drivers of economic development affects how they are engaged in many spaces. In fact, their active political participation in decision-making processes should be considered a key aspect for the future of the continent, but this is not even mentioned in the declaration. Youth, especially young women, should have the space for political participation and opportunity to be in leadership positions.

The focus on the **digital transition** is welcome. However, it should be accompanied with an acknowledgment of the groups that face the most challenges in benefitting from the advantages of this transition: girls and young women, and if from rural areas even more so. Technology and the internet can be great enablers for gender equality, but a lack of opportunities, skills and fear of discrimination prevent many from using and creating digital tools and online content. In fact, girls and young women are often harassed and abused online and therefore their freedom online should be a key priority for the digital transition agenda.

We welcome the focus on **inclusive and equitable quality education**, with the objective of addressing the gaps resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of schools has exposed millions of young

women and adolescent girls to increasing protection risks and severely threatens their futures as girls out of schools are less likely to resume.¹ They should be at the center of recovery strategies.

On **peace and security**, considering the numerous challenges our continents are facing, we welcome the effort to promote the rule of law and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security, Children and Armed Conflict and the Youth, Peace and Security Agendas, and underpin it with concrete actions to achieve durable peace. Children, particularly girls, and young people are the ones paying the highest price in situations of crisis and conflict and they therefore need to be considered an active part of the solution. We are disappointed to see no acknowledgement of the '**triple nexus**' between humanitarian aid, peacebuilding and development. Its value is the ability to capitalize on the comparative advantage of each of these areas to tackle complex protracted crises and strengthen the resilience of communities, which we believe is crucial for many challenges our continents face.

We agree on the importance of addressing the **root causes** of forced migration and we welcome the commitment to invest in youth and women to support their empowerment, skills, education and employment prospects. From another perspective, research shows that most African migrants, migrate within the continent². Intra-continental migration enables international entrepreneurship and fosters business opportunities and sustainable economic empowerment of youth. The AU envisages that the free movement of persons, capital, goods and services promotes economic integration, facilitates intra-Africa trade and investment, creates employment and improves the standards of living of Africans³. And although the EU aims to provide incentives for economic integration, its migration policy – aimed at curbing migration towards Europe – has a strong negative effect on the free movement of people in Africa. Moreover, it limits and curbs entrepreneurial opportunities for young people and is therefore a structural impediment for youth economic empowerment.

When it comes to civil society and young people's **ownership** of this Partnership, we are disappointed. The declaration takes note of the contributions by the Youth, Civil Society, Local authorities and private sector during the Africa-Europe Week and the Europe-Africa Business Forum and encourages all relevant stakeholders to continue to engage towards our renewed Partnership. This encouragement sounds empty when there is no clear and accessible information about the mechanisms through which African and European youth and civil society can be engaged in monitoring and following-up the commitments of this Partnership. Civil society and young people should have played a bigger role in the build up to the Summit, for which only hasty preparation was possible, and are key in the follow-up, monitoring and implementation of the commitments of this Partnership.

¹ Plan International, [Evaluation of Adolescent Girls and Young Women's access to education during COVID-19](#)

² Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [African Migration Trends to Watch in 2022.pdf](#)

³ African Union, [Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment](#)

The Global Gateway and the Investment Packages

We are concerned with the lack of clarity of the €150 billion under the [Global Gateway](#) allocated to Africa. The declaration mentions public and private investments, member states contributions, international and national financing institutions, but there are no concrete deliverables. We call for more clarity on the amount stemming from the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, and other contributions, as well as clarity on who will be the beneficiaries of such investments, and the exact amount which will be allocated to civil society. Lack of transparency in the past has resulted in failed delivery of the commitments. Not delivering this time would mean jeopardizing the trust relationship that the two continents are working hard to build and preserve, despite many setbacks. Additionally, this seems to be yet another investment prepared by Europe and well aligned with European priorities, but with little ownership from the African side. If this is to become a Partnership between equals, the EU needs to be willing to address internal issues of interest to the African continent too.

The Global Gateway's Investment Packages are focused on:

- Accelerating the green transition
- Accelerating the digital transition
- Accelerating sustainable growth and decent job creation
- Strengthening health systems
- Improving education and training

Some of these priorities align well with Plan International's priorities. However, many of the packages provide very little information and no further specification about the financial commitments pertaining to specific packages. We call for more clarity and transparency in regards to the economic ambitions for all financial packages, in order to be able to monitor the Global Gateway's implementation.

We look positively at the focus on **climate resilience**. However, we see no mention of those who are the most affected by disasters and often the least consulted: children and girls. They have the right to participate in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation, both at the decision-making, implementation and monitoring stages at local and national levels. Greater investments in DRR are needed, however the lack of information makes it hard to understand what this means in practice. Moreover, as Plan International we believe this theme is very closely linked with another investment package: education. Children's education is often one of the first activities abandoned when disasters occur, yet it can play a critical role in building the resilience of children and their communities. It should therefore be a key focus for disaster preparedness and DRR work.

We welcome that **quality education at all levels** is acknowledged as a priority for this Partnership, as outlined earlier. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is crucial for young people to access the knowledge, skills and services necessary to secure productive, decent work, and to access financial services. Particularly important is the focus on including those who live in situations of

marginalization - especially adolescent girls - so that they can have the tools to improve their lives. We are happy about the focus on girls in the Global Partnership for Education initiative where “Team Europe and African partners join forces with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to transform education systems and thereby boost jobs and growth, drive gender equality and build resilient, prosperous and inclusive societies”. However it is not clear whether this will happen with new pledges, in addition to those made in 2021.

We welcome the focus on **young business** and the gender lens applied in this initiative, for them to launch, consolidate and grow sustainable and inclusive businesses and create decent jobs.

The last section of the Health Investment Package mentions a Team Europe Initiative on **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**. Considering the failed negotiations on this topic to be included in the joint declaration, there is no surprise in the fact that the information in the package is extremely superficial. The initiative will have “a particular focus on adolescent girls and young women: political commitment, availability, accountability”. It is not clear what the three last words mean in practice and we would also like to report concern regarding the lack of mention of comprehensive sexuality education. Regarding financial commitments, 60 million euros from the EU budget have been allocated to this, “to be enhanced by further funding from Team Europe”. This information needs to be made transparent as soon as it is available.

While we welcome the initiatives under the **digital package** and the acknowledgement of the digital gap, we wish there was a more in depth acknowledgement of the groups that do not benefit from the digital transition and their role in this transition.

Conclusion

During Africa-Europe week, Plan International came together with the African youth-led networks [Nala Feminist Collective](#), [Afrisist](#) and [GIMAC Young Women Network](#) to co-organize a session on “Young women’s political participation for intergenerational co-leadership”. The session was rich with ideas, challenges and recommendations which all had one focus: ensuring young people, and especially young women, are not left behind in decision-making spaces in the AU-EU Partnership and beyond. These recommendations, and many more, have become part of [a letter](#) we have co-written, to make sure young voices are considered by AU and EU leaders and to ensure this Partnership is truly transformative for young people. Some of the priority areas identified by the letter are:

1. Education and Skills Development;
2. Youth Economic Justice and Freedom;
3. Girls’ and Young Women’s Political Participation for Intergenerational Co-Leadership;
4. Climate Justice and Food Security;
5. Silencing the Guns for Resilience, Peace and Security;
6. Migration, Mobility and Free Movement of Persons.

We are glad to see that some of our collective priorities are reflected in the joint declaration, but they need to be bolder. Young people have clear ideas regarding their expectations from this Partnership. AU and EU leaders have acknowledged on paper that they have valuable inputs and a role to play. The question is: are they now willing to really listen and meaningfully involve them in fostering the AU-EU Partnership and its implementation?
