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3rd Africa – EU Summit (29-30 November 2010, Libya)

European and African Universities call on heads of state to move higher education up political agenda

Two associations representing more than 1 000 universities in Africa and Europe (the Association of African Universities and the European University Association) are calling on political leaders from both continents meeting later this month for the 3rd Africa-EU Summit to make sure that higher education has a stronger position in the political agenda outlined in the 'Africa-EU Strategic Partnership'.

In a detailed statement to heads of state (and to members of the European Commission and Parliament) the AAU and EUA underline their concerns that the role of universities in Africa and university cooperation between Europe and Africa, have not been adequately promoted in the political dialogue between both continents.

Stressing the findings of a recent [White Paper on Africa-Europe university cooperation](#), the outcome of a two year project of AAU, EUA and several other European higher education organisations, the statement calls for a 'clear position' for higher education within the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and its eight thematic sub-partnerships.

The statement also explains that universities play a vital role in linking education and research and contribute significantly to the science and innovation agendas. Therefore, they should be better informed about the Partnership and also engaged in an appropriate manner.

Furthermore the EUA and AAU call for the creation of a sustainable information exchange and dialogue platform that could provide an umbrella for the many ongoing initiatives driven by member states, donor agencies and individual higher education institutions, and enhance exchange, mutual learning and cooperation among them, in particular with regards to the regional integration projects of Africa and Europe.

Both organisations also invite the European and African Union Commissions to take steps to strengthen intra- and inter-regional student and staff mobility schemes, by assessing the impact of current initiatives, and e.g. by consulting alumni of existing programmes. Both Unions should look into funding projects on strategic higher education priorities for both continents, such as modernising higher education, creating a regional dimension to institutional quality assurance, developing doctoral education and the internationalisation of research. It is stressed that these types of projects are of mutual learning benefit.

Finally, the European Union should also support the role of higher education and higher education partnerships in European development policy through its funding mechanisms. In particular, it should revise the current restriction in the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) that only stakeholders in developing countries should benefit from funding. The joint statement of AAU and EUA underlines that higher education cooperation can only be meaningful if exchange is reciprocal. Currently, restrictions regarding eligibility of costs incurred by European universities in EU funding programmes are clearly one of the factors that impact negatively. European universities have expressed concern about incentivising staff to take up development cooperation activities, e.g. for collaborative research and student and staff exchange. The statement recommends that the DCI grants exceptions to, or otherwise finds ways of providing funding opportunities for universities, university networks and associations in Europe.

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Notes for editors

- Download the full EUA/AAU statement here:
http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/Joint_Statement_of_the_Association_AAU_and_EUA.sflb.ashx
- Find out more about the 3rd Summit here: <http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/3rd-africa-eu-summit>
- Find out more about Africa EU Strategic Partnership here: <http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/partnerships/africa-eu-strategic-partnership>
- EUA and AAU are part of an international consortium of African and European higher education organisations that published a White Paper in September outlining a series of recommendations for strengthening higher education cooperation between the two continents, both as a response to global challenges and to contribute to African development. The publication is available in French and English and is based on the outcomes and findings of a major two-year (EC-funded) project "Access to Success - Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa".
- The European University Association (EUA) represents and supports higher education institutions in 46 countries, providing them with a unique forum to cooperate and keep abreast of the latest trends in higher education and research policies. Members of the Association are European universities involved in teaching and research, national associations of rectors and other organisations active in higher education and research. EUA plays an essential role in shaping tomorrow's European higher education and research landscape thanks to its unique knowledge of the sector and the diversity of its members. The Association's mandate in the Bologna Process, contribution to EU research policy-making and relations with intergovernmental organisations, European institutions and international associations, ensure its capacity to debate issues which are crucial for universities in relation to higher education, research and innovation. www.eua.be
- The Association of African Universities (AAU) is an international non-governmental organisation set up by the universities in Africa to promote cooperation among themselves and with the international academic community. The AAU is a forum for consultation, exchange of information, and cooperation among universities in Africa. In addition to fostering contact and cooperation among universities and other institutions of higher education in Africa, the Association is charged with collecting, classifying, and disseminating information on higher education and research, particularly in Africa. It also promotes cooperation among African higher education institutions in curriculum development, post graduate training, research, quality assurance, and other matters of special policy or practical interest to African higher education. The Association endeavours to empower member universities to address developmental challenges and become an effective voice in national, regional and global institutions. As of July 2010, AAU has 225 members from 44 African countries. www.aau.org