



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Africa Strategy of the Netherlands 2023-2032



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The Africa Strategy of the Netherlands 2023-2032

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Summary

The first Dutch continent-wide strategy on Africa comprises an integrated vision of political and economic cooperation with the continent of Africa. As stated in the coalition agreement, the government wishes to encourage economic development on equal footing, reduce poverty, improve respect for human rights and limit irregular migration. The fundamental shifts in global geopolitical relations mean that more cooperation with Africa is not only necessary but urgent. A strategy is required that sets out clearly how the Netherlands intends to collaborate successfully with its African partners, now and in the future, in fostering a stable, peaceful and secure neighbouring continent.

The collaboration with Africa will be founded more on equality than it was in the past. Equality requires an understanding of each other's position, puts the relationship at the heart and seeks collaboration on the basis of mutual interests. A successful, equal collaboration brings together important issues: intensive bilateral and multilateral cooperation, promoting Dutch, African and mutual economic and strategic interests, enhancing (regional) stability, making mobility and migration agreements, achieving the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063, and enhancing the prosperity as well as the climate resilience of people and communities in Africa and Europe.

At the European Union (EU) – African Union summit in February 2022, a joint vision was endorsed setting out a commitment to a prosperous and sustainable Africa and Europe, centring on solidarity, security, peace and sustainable and sustained economic development and prosperity for the citizens of the two Unions. With the Global Gateway strategy, the EU is pursuing a recognisable external strategy and investment agenda. The Netherlands is working through the EU and in collaboration with EU member states on the basis of this vision, while also maintaining intensive bilateral relations of its own with many African countries and partners. Policy coherence is essential for the relevance and credibility of the Netherlands and Europe in their collaboration with Africa.

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With this strategy, the Netherlands is striving for effective trade agreements, stronger economic ties and improved access for Dutch businesses to the African market in combination with support for African partners to gain enhanced access to the European market. Making raw materials and value chains more sustainable should result on the one hand in improved European access to vital raw materials and, on the other, greater added value and employment opportunities in Africa. The Netherlands also sees a major role for close European-African collaboration on equitable and inclusive energy transitions on the basis of renewable energy, focused on achieving universal access. In addition, the Netherlands wants to collaborate on secure and inclusive digitalisation that will contribute to economic opportunities and employment as well as improved access to social and health services.

Furthermore, in this strategy the Netherlands underlines the importance of stability, peace and security for African countries and the continent's inhabitants. This also helps to make Europe's southern border secure and to combat and prevent violent cross-border extremism. Peace and security in Africa are thus also in the Netherlands' interests and require a sustained commitment. An effective multilateral order is a shared interest in the pursuit of enhanced economic, political and security agreements, in Africa and worldwide. In this context, the Netherlands regards good governance and transparency as foundations for legitimacy, legal certainty and broad social development. Support for civil society organisations fosters inclusive societies and helps to achieve the UN's SDGs.

The Netherlands is pursuing effective, sustainable cooperation on migration. It should be developed in collaboration with African partners, within the frameworks of international and European law. The Netherlands will also continue to contribute to the realisation of the sustainable reception of refugees and displaced persons in the region, on the basis of self-reliance and socioeconomic inclusion in the national systems of receiving countries. The Netherlands will also continue to be a reliable partner in terms of socioeconomic ambitions, the reduction of extreme poverty in Africa, enhanced food security, improved health and climate resilience. A just climate transition and the attainment of the goals of the Paris Agreement are crucial in this respect. Women and young people play a key role in all aspects of the policy.

The Dutch Strategy on Africa is worked out in detail in an action-based agenda that translates vision and commitment into recognisable actions in the short, medium and long term.



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Abbreviations

ADP	Amsterdam Declarations Partnership
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
AIP	Continental Africa Water Investment Programme
AIV	Advisory Council on International Affairs
ATAF	African Tax Administration Forum
AU	African Union
BHOS	Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COP27	2022 UN Climate Change Conference
CRMA	European Critical Raw Materials Act
DFCD	Dutch Fund for Climate and Development
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIB	European Investment Bank
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FMO	Dutch development bank
GSP	Generalised Scheme of Preferences
GNP	Gross National Product
HGIS	Homogeneous Budget for International Cooperation
ICS	International Cyber Strategy
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International financial institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NLCS	Netherlands Cybersecurity Strategy
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RBC	Responsible business conduct
REC	Regional economic community (in Africa)
RVO	Netherlands Enterprise Agency
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAH	Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VNO-NCW	Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization



Photocredits: Sven Torfinn

Introduction: Changing relations, a new strategy

Africa is increasingly taking its own prominent place on the world stage. Whether it concerns trade and raw materials, geopolitical interests and security, demographics, cultural identity or sport, Africa's position is becoming more and more influential. The Netherlands maintains excellent, wide-ranging and close relations with many of the 54 African countries, which value Dutch knowledge and expertise highly. At the same time, the rapid changes in Africa and growing geopolitical and geo-economic competition require a strategy that will enable us to continue our successful cooperation with Africa in the future. We work with African countries, institutions and partners directly, through the European Union (EU) and in other multilateral forums.

As neighbouring continents, Europe and Africa have close ties. The EU is Africa's main trading partner and investor, and a major provider of funds for development and humanitarian aid. At the same time, Europe views its neighbour with concern because of entrenched inequality in living standards, instability on the EU's external borders and irregular migration. For its part, Africa regards Europe with mixed feelings: as a continent of wide-ranging cooperation and opportunities, but also as a continent with a colonial past that sometimes applies double standards. The two continents have considerable mutual interests, and good relations with African partners are vital for meeting future challenges.

Common goals and interests should therefore be at the heart of the relationship between Africa and Europe. An effective bilateral partnership within a well-functioning multilateral order is important for both continents. This is necessary in order to achieve the common goals of security, stability, human rights, prosperity, sustainability, international trade, migration and mobility. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have once again highlighted this very clearly. The EU is thus seeking support from African countries on the multilateral stage, cooperation with them on the migration issue, and their help in reducing undesirable strategic dependencies. African countries also want their interests to be recognised. At the same time they stand to benefit from European investment and support in dealing with the consequences of global challenges such as climate change. All this requires cooperation on an equal footing, taking a partnership-based approach. By applying this attitude and methodology the Netherlands aims, working within the EU as a larger whole, to offer an attractive alternative to the growing influence of other geopolitical players.

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This first Dutch continent-wide Africa Strategy comprises an integrated vision of our cooperation with Africa. The government seeks to use it to promote economic development founded on equality, reduce poverty, improve respect for human rights and limit irregular migration, as set out in the coalition agreement. This strategy elaborates our shared interests and their relative importance in respect of these and related issues, and presents our plans to pursue those interests.

The Africa Strategy looks ahead 10 years and thus anticipates long-term changes in relations between Africa and Europe.¹ This period overlaps with the second implementation phase of the African Union's 'Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want'. Like Agenda 2063, the Dutch strategy covers the whole of Africa; we are abandoning the artificial split in policy between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. We are, however, mindful of the significant differences between regions and individual countries within the African continent. The strategy builds on the objectives and thematic and geographic priorities of existing Dutch policy. The Africa Strategy draws broadly from current policy documents² and their implementation frameworks, with the aim of promoting policy coherence.

¹ Motion submitted by MPs Anne Kuik and Mustafa Amhaouch on the Africa Task Force and an Africa Strategy for the coming decade (Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 35570 XVII, no. 24).

² 'Do What We Do Best: A Strategy for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation', Foreign Affairs Policy Letter, the Netherlands' Global Climate Strategy, Dutch Global Health Strategy, feminist foreign policy, 'Youth at Heart: Young People at the Heart of Dutch Development Cooperation', 'A Secure Netherlands in a Secure World: International Security Strategy', International Cyber Strategy (ICS), policy frameworks for strengthening civil society, multilateralism, human rights, migration, raw materials and food security, revised action plan on policy coherence for development, and letter to parliament on open strategic autonomy.

The strategy also contains an agenda geared towards action that translates vision and commitment into recognisable actions in the short, medium and long term. We are aware that changing relationships call for trade-offs and choices that can in some cases be made now, but can often only be made as the strategy is implemented.

This Africa Strategy has been produced on the basis of broad-based consultations and in-depth discussions with civil society partners, knowledge institutions, the business sector, the diaspora, international organisations and public authorities, in the Netherlands, in Europe and above all in Africa itself.³ In addition, use was made of the advisory letter on Africa by the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV)⁴.

³ Motion submitted by MP Alexander Hammelburg on consultations relating to the Africa Strategy (Parliamentary Paper, House of Representatives, 2021/22, 34952, no. 165).

⁴ AIV advisory letter 36: 'Urgent Need for a New Dutch Strategy on Africa', 14 July 2022.





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A changing continent

Africa and its position in the world have changed drastically over the last 20 years, even though there are considerable differences between individual countries and regions. These changes, which will persist in the foreseeable future, are affected significantly by developments in global politics and the economic balance of power. Four clusters of trends form the backdrop for the choices the Netherlands is making with respect to our future efforts in and with Africa: growing geopolitical competition for influence and raw materials; continuing instability, unrest and armed conflict; the opportunities and challenges that go hand-in-hand with the rapidly burgeoning young population; and the enduring disparities in living standards with Europe and the rest of the world. These are described briefly below.

Geopolitical competition in and for Africa

- Africa's importance is growing, and this is manifesting itself in a surge in geopolitical competition on the African continent, where the presence of countries such as China, India, Japan, the Gulf states, Russia and Turkey has soared over the past few decades. These players have deepened their diplomatic, trade and military relations with African partners.
- The relative economic and political power of the EU and the Netherlands in Africa is waning. China's unstoppable global rise and the accompanying shift of economic influence to Asia is eminently visible in Africa. China is using investments in digital and other infrastructure, telecommunications and renewable energy to further its economic as well as its political and security interests.
- China has growing control of raw materials supply chains. Africa has stocks of raw materials, including rare earth metals, that are essential for the energy transition. Many of the raw materials extracted in Africa are currently shipped to China for refining before they reach Europe. This makes the EU vulnerable and denies Africa scope to profit from adding value on the continent itself and from trading directly with Europe.
- Military activity by non-state actors, such as the Wagner Group, and arms supplies to unstable and undemocratic regimes are resulting in increased local and cross-border insecurity. National authorities in these countries are finding it ever more difficult to protect their population and guarantee security even in the capital, let alone in remote areas. According to reports from various sources, the Wagner Group is active in countries including the Central African Republic, Mali, Sudan and Libya. With limited military support, the Russian Federation is trying to expand its geopolitical footprint in Africa and reduce the influence of Western countries.
- With 28% of the votes in the UN General Assembly held by African countries, Africa is an important partner in terms of safeguarding security and upholding and promoting the international legal order. Although Africa and Europe both benefit from effective multilateralism, European and African countries do not automatically agree on global issues. The persistent and organised manipulation of information and the dissemination of disinformation in Africa by Russia and other actors is cause for concern in this respect.

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Continued instability, unrest and armed conflict

- Africa is seeing an increase in political and other instability, unrest and armed conflict. It is currently the continent in which the threat of jihadist and other violent extremist groups is growing most rapidly, and it is where their attacks claim the most victims. Countries facing severe instability issues are lagging far behind when it comes to achieving sustainable development (UN Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs), especially when instability erupts into violent conflict.
- Extremist organisations capitalise on deep-rooted discontent, ethnic and religious profiling and the lack of future prospects – economic and otherwise – among the predominantly young population. Various jihadist organisations, whether linked to Islamic State or al Qa'ida or not, are exploiting the power vacuum that exists in various African countries. They also profit from organised crime and its connections, including illegal trade in arms, raw materials and drugs, and human trafficking.
- Continuing instability in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and North Africa is putting more and more pressure on Europe's southern border. Socioeconomic factors that result in a lack of options and future prospects, political and social factors that feed a sense of injustice and insecurity, and the impact of climate change on day-to-day life are all root causes of instability. This multifaceted instability not only leads to potential recruitment by violent extremist groups, but is also expected to generate increasing migration flows of people who want or need to leave their country.

A young, self-assured and connected population

- By 2050, half of all young people worldwide will be living in Africa. Half of the 54 countries in Africa will see their populations almost double between now and 2050. The total population of Africa is expected to double from 1.2 to 2.4 billion inhabitants. The coming decades are expected to see the emergence of a growing number of megacities in Africa with tens of millions of inhabitants. It will be a major challenge to provide this young and rapidly growing population with jobs, housing, education, healthcare, proper nutrition, connectivity and security. Where this is successful, countless opportunities will be opened up for a major leap in prosperity.
- Young people are presenting themselves, both online and offline, as drivers for change in Africa. Where they have sufficient political scope and access to the necessary digital infrastructure, they will increasingly propose innovative and digital solutions to social, economic and climate-related challenges. If they are not given the scope to do this, there will be no leap in prosperity and rapid population growth will increase the risk of social and political unrest, armed conflict and instability.
- The younger generations are placing more and more emphasis on a strong cultural identity, African heritage and shared African values and ethics. Partly due to the growing influence of various geopolitical players in Africa, the EU and its member states are increasingly being accused of hypocrisy and neocolonialism and confronted about the legacy of their colonial past, a past which affects the way Africa and Europe relate to each other in the face of the major challenges of the 21st century.

Persistent gaps in living standards with Europe and the rest of the world

- Africa's level of prosperity and economic integration are lagging behind the rest of the world. Forecasts of growth and sustainability on the African continent vary, partly as a result of shifts in the global economic and political balance of power. The Africa Poverty Clock⁵ shows an increase in poverty in Africa since 2020, linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the future, unacceptable levels of poverty and inequality will be concentrated more and more in conflict regions. Poverty levels are expected to fall towards the end of the current decade.
- Apart from internal African factors, the accumulation and knock-on effects of external factors appear to be having a negative impact on Africa's prospects for rising living standards. These external factors include the financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, debt issues (resulting in public services such as education and healthcare remaining or becoming underfunded), the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the growing rivalry between systems at geopolitical level.
- Migration caused by a lack of future prospects continues, both between and within African countries and to other continents. The desire to seek work or establish a livelihood outside the continent persists. Although various African countries have experienced impressive economic development in recent years (until the COVID-19 pandemic hit), this growth has not been reflected sufficiently in new jobs. Unemployment among the young population is a major problem, both in rural areas – currently home to 60% of the population – and certainly in Africa's rapidly expanding cities as well.

⁵ <https://www.uneca.org/africa-poverty-clock>.





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Starting points

The Netherlands has identified five starting points for elaborating the aims of this new Africa Strategy. We will apply the principle of shared Dutch and African interests. Universal values and human rights remain important, and we will collaborate on an equal basis. Other key starting points are the EU/AU Joint Vision together with policy coherence and coherent commitments, and these are detailed in this chapter.

Shared Dutch and African interests

Europe and Africa have a major shared interest in tackling the urgent challenges of our time in relation to climate change, security, poverty reduction and increasing prosperity. Many of the topics set out in this strategy, such as a well-functioning trade system, an enhanced business climate, more sustainable raw materials supply chains and improved cybersecurity, affect the interests of African countries as well as the Netherlands.

At the same time, this strategy also addresses topics on which our interests do not necessarily converge, such as the energy transition and migration. In such cases, our relationship will be defined by the acknowledgement of each other's interests and the scope we give each other to express our distinctive interests and values. The Netherlands will clearly state its interests, in this strategy and elsewhere, and will at the same time specifically ask our African partners about theirs.

We are aware that there may be a tension between divergent interests and values. In our collaboration with African partners on shared interests and strategic issues, the Netherlands will be mindful of the democratic legitimacy of our interlocutors, and the need to promote the multilateral order and champion the national and international values, norms and interests that the Netherlands and the EU stand for. All of these are based on the AU's Agenda 2063 (see Box 1), the UN SDGs, the EU-AU partnership and other international agreements.

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Universal human rights are based on human dignity, freedom, non-discrimination and equality. This is laid down internationally in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and elaborated in human rights conventions and many instruments of soft law. However frequently and forcefully anti-democratic or authoritarian regimes claim otherwise, human rights are widely recognised and supported all over the world. This is evidenced by, for example, the various human rights conventions that have been ratified and implemented in recent years, often at the initiative of countries from the Global South, as well as the aspirations expressed in this regard in the AU's Agenda 2063 (see Box 1). This universality is also visible in the collaboration between many countries worldwide in the field of human rights and the many businesses and organisations committed to the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights contribute to a greater good: the right of all human beings to develop their full potential in freedom, equality and dignity. The Netherlands remains firmly committed to the principle of universal and individual rights. In accordance with feminist foreign policy, particular attention will be paid to the position of women and girls; although they make up half of the global population, structural gender inequality still prevails. That is often even more the case for minority groups, such as LGBTIQ+ people. Other factors, such as ethnicity, religion and physical and other disability, also determine the further extent to which people are treated unequally. The local context will partly determine how countries such as the Netherlands can contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights, equal rights and equal opportunities. After all, recognising that cultural and historical diversity can affect countries' approach to human rights can promote universal acceptance of those same rights.

Equality

The reality of an emerging Africa and shifting global relations calls emphatically for cooperation founded on equality that covers the full breadth of the relationship between Africa and Europe. Equality puts a central emphasis on our relationship itself, and demands that we invest in it on a permanent basis. Equality requires that we understand and appreciate each other's position, recognise our shared history and are willing to provide support on issues that are important to each other. This continent-wide Africa strategy thus focuses heavily on partnerships and thereby on improved cooperation with African institutions. Successful, equal collaboration must combine several major elements: promoting Dutch, African and mutual economic and strategic interests, enhancing regional and broader stability, reaching agreements on mobility and migration, achieving the SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063, and enhancing the prosperity and climate resilience of people and communities in Africa and Europe. Finally, it is extremely important, with a view to equality, to be more aware of the potentially negative impact on Africa of Dutch and European policies and actions, and to take that adequately into account in decision-making.

Working on the basis of the EU/AU Joint Vision

The EU, our primary vehicle for action, and the AU are important partners when it comes to trade and investment, security, the renewable energy transition, international cooperation and humanitarian aid, and achieving the UN SDGs. The EU is committed to working with Africa to tackle the challenges of the 21st century, serve common interests and further shape the shared future of Europe and Africa. At their summit in February 2022, the EU and AU reached detailed agreements on a renewed partnership which centres on solidarity, security, peace and lasting sustainable economic development and prosperity for the citizens of both Unions. The Netherlands is working via the EU and in collaboration with EU member states on the basis of the vision of the Africa-EU Partnership, while maintaining its own close relations with many African countries and partners. This also requires an enhanced Dutch commitment within the EU to make Global Gateway and other initiatives a success.

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According to the partnership's vision, common priorities, shared values and international law will be promoted and mutual interests and collective goods protected. This explicitly includes protecting human rights and the rule of law and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in all aspects of life. The vision also includes agreements on protecting the climate and biodiversity, encouraging sustainable and inclusive economic growth and addressing inequality. Attention was also drawn to acute challenges, including the debt issue and the production of and fair access to vaccines, medicines and medical devices.

Policy coherence and commitment

We are all too aware that inconsistent action will raise doubts about our own credibility and the effectiveness of our policy. We can only be – and remain – a reliable and credible partner to Africa if our deeds match our words. Policy coherence will significantly boost Dutch and European credibility in Africa. When formulating new policy, we will take the interests of and impact on the countries concerned into consideration.⁶ The Revised Action Plan for Policy Coherence for Development⁷ issued at the end of 2022 prioritises topics that are directly related to the achievement of the UN SDGs. By implementing coherent policy, both bilaterally and through the EU, the Netherlands can help to make the difference on issues such as climate, food and water, illicit financial flows and tax avoidance, and global health and vaccine inequalities.

⁶ Beleidskompas.nl (in Dutch).

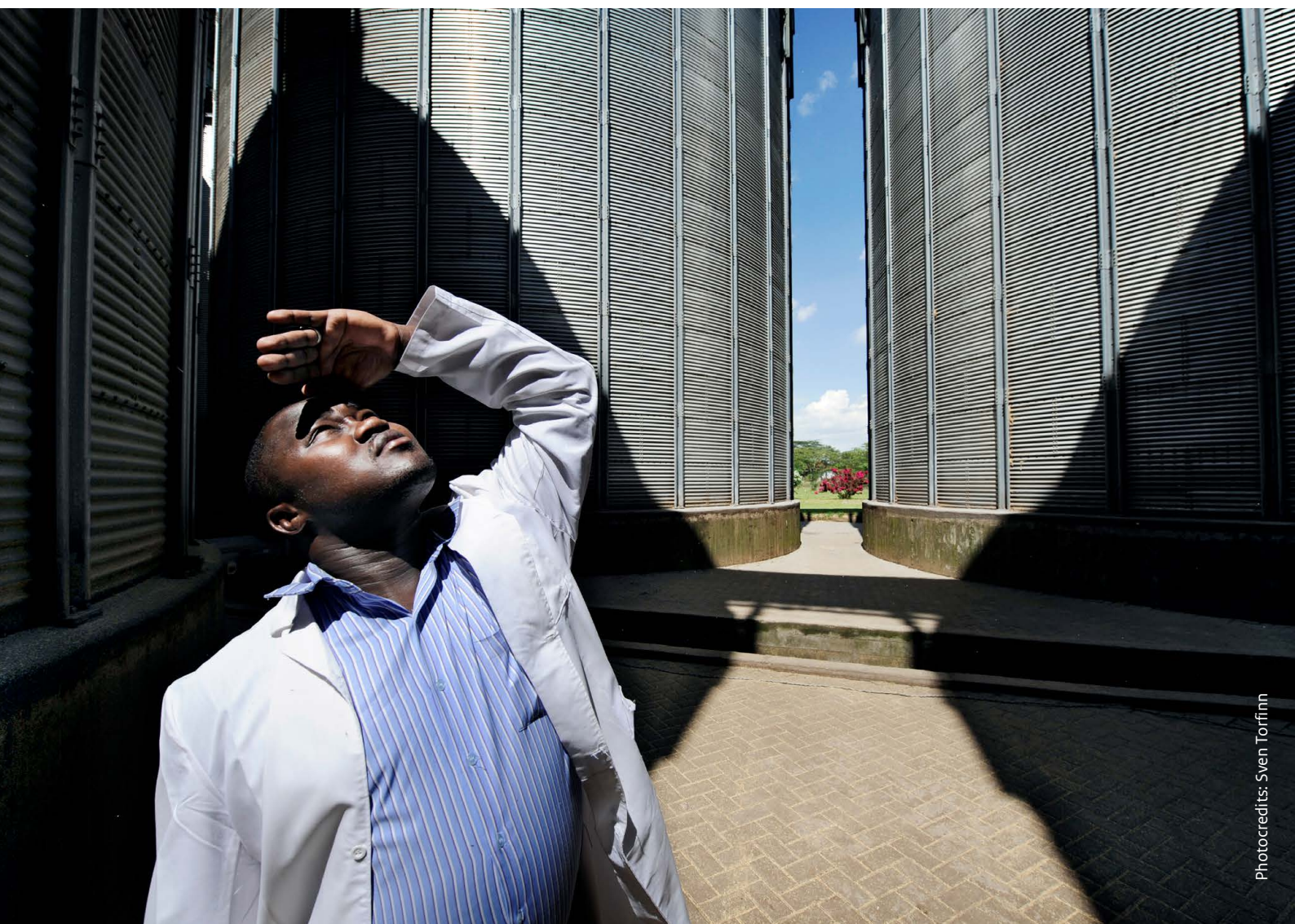
⁷ Letter to parliament on the Revised Action Plan for Policy Coherence for Development, 25 November 2022 (BZDOC-1952392878-41).

Box 1. Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want

In 2013, the African Union launched a long-term development agenda for Africa: '[Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want](#)'. This presents a continent-wide vision for greater political and economic integration and development, broken down into seven aspirations:

1. A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
2. An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance
3. An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
4. A peaceful and secure Africa
5. An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics
6. An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children
7. Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner

Agenda 2063 identifies a number of basic requirements, including: African ownership and self-reliance; the use of Africa's own wealth for the development of the continent; democratic, capable, accountable and responsive leadership and institutions; a Pan-African perspective on solidarity; and integration and collaboration on continental and global issues. Ten-year implementation plans will be used to translate Agenda 2063 into concrete actions.





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Collaboration based on shared goals and mutual interests

Africa's potential and challenges require an ambitious and positive forward-looking agenda. After extensive consultation with various Dutch, international and above all African partners, we are setting out the proposed Dutch aims for partnerships on the African continent in relation to economic development; security and stability; migration, reception and return; poverty reduction, food security and climate resilience. In the coming years, a sharper gender lens will be applied in all areas of Dutch policy and action, in line with the main elements of feminist foreign policy.⁸ Promoting gender equality, women's rights and the rights of marginalised people is an integral part of Dutch foreign policy. In order to reflect the diversity of countries and regions, the Netherlands will decide the manner of implementation in consultation with the stakeholders.

3.1 Economic development on equal footing

Aims:

- Promote economic growth in Europe and Africa and make better use of Africa's growing market and investment potential.
- Promote economic integration and support African partners in designing import and export rules.
- Base economic relations on the principle of equality, with a focus on making mutually beneficial trade deals.
- Promote the integration of African businesses in value chains with the Netherlands and the EU, and make them more sustainable, working in collaboration with local and European partners and civil society organisations.
- Support Dutch and African businesses and knowledge institutions in their activities in Africa and particularly in their contributions to sustainability, digitalisation and the further development of the agri-food sector, and in addressing other complex challenges faced by African economies.
- Support the creation of enabling conditions, such as anti-corruption measures, and promote sound financial management and the rule of law.
- Aim for win-win partnerships with resource-rich developing countries with a view to the sustainable extraction, processing and trade of vital raw materials.
- Support just and inclusive energy transitions based on renewable energy and focused on achieving universal access to energy.
- Promote secure and inclusive digitalisation that contributes to economic opportunities and employment, and to improved access to social and health services.

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3.1.1 *A leap in prosperity with the private sector, knowledge and expertise as drivers*

The Netherlands seeks to contribute to a more rapid and in particular inclusive rise in living standards in Africa and Europe. The Dutch and African private sectors are essential in this endeavour, as creators of jobs and generators of prosperity. This requires long-term investment in the combination of macroeconomic stability, legal protection and further formalisation of what is frequently a large informal sector. Key priorities for in-depth exploration include developing the African private sector and creating job opportunities, facilitating sustainability and the digital transition, integrating African businesses into European value chains and making them more sustainable, and enhancing the agri-food sector, development-related infrastructure and regional trade. We are working on these points with African partners (public and private), development banks (such as FMO, the Dutch development bank) and other financial institutions (such as Atradius Dutch State Business (DSB), which provides export credit insurance for our business sector), the Dutch business sector and knowledge institutions and civil society partners.

In line with the Africa strategy launched by the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW) and the Royal (SME) Association MKB-Nederland, we are bolstering the local business climate and stimulating development-related infrastructure through Invest International, the EU and multilateral development banks, as well as by means of our policy commitment to promote sustainable forms of procurement in collaboration with like-minded stakeholders. We are also helping to expand economic opportunities in the green and digital transitions, partly by accelerating the shift to more sustainable and digital business models. These transitions go hand in hand with measures to combat

⁸ Letter to parliament on feminist foreign policy, 8 November 2022 (BZDOC-1584136316-39).

abuses relating to people and labour (such as forced labour, child labour, and unsafe and unhealthy working conditions) as well as the promotion of a living wage and income on the African continent. Our priority is collaboration with the eight 'combination countries' referred to in the policy document for foreign trade and development cooperation (BHOS) 'Do What we Do Best' (see 3.4.3), while keeping an eye out for substantial opportunities in other African markets. Using our instruments, and in consultation with the Netherlands-Africa Trade Promotion Task Force, we are focusing particularly on specific opportunities for our agri-food sector.⁹

Green tugboats

Working capital cover for eco-friendly ships: Invest International has set up a secured loan facility for Damen Shipyards to enable Damen-built green tugboats to be leased to SME clients in Africa. Each ship is leased to a specific client and the client can buy the vessel during the term of the lease. This leasing solution allows private companies and port authorities in Africa to operate ultramodern ships with state-of-the-art technology in terms of safety, sustainability and efficiency.

Dutch businesses and SMEs, particularly startups from the diaspora, can strengthen the Netherlands' bond with Africa. In the coming decades, a combination of ambition, realism and collaboration will be needed to help Dutch businesses and their African partners get started in promising African growth markets. Ambition because both the government and the Dutch business sector see the potential and the economic and geopolitical interests in fruitful economic relations. Realism, because doing business in Africa requires more perseverance, greater flexibility and more risk management than markets closer to home. Close collaboration between government, the business sector, research institutions and civil society stakeholders is vital for fostering a level playing field, for ensuring the sustainability of marketing chains and the elimination of bottlenecks that we can influence, and for conducting valuable market surveys, economic missions or events. In this connection, African and Dutch entrepreneurs are unanimous in their plea for improved visa procedures for their intercontinental travel, including the direct issue of visas by the Netherlands in growth markets.

In addition to the green and digital transitions, the healthcare sector could also generate millions of extra jobs in Africa, but this will require an enhanced connection between the quality of education, the needs of employers and the sectors offering decent job prospects. For this reason the Netherlands is supporting the vocational and higher education sectors in African countries with a new long-term programme focusing on knowledge as well as skills. This will enable young Africans to be better prepared for the local labour market, which in turn will enhance their economic and social prospects. Priority is being given to young women's access to and participation in vocational education and the link to the labour market.

To connect with Africa's mainly young population, we are also investing in reciprocal and equal education and research partnerships, scholarship programmes and cultural cooperation. One example of such investment is the Dutch International Knowledge and Research Strategy (IKT), which aims to enhance the quality of higher education and science in the Netherlands by strengthening international cooperation. Establishing and reinforcing equal, lasting partnerships is a central component of knowledge cooperation with Africa. The IKT identifies South Africa as a focus country.

⁹ Motion submitted by MPs Jan Klink and Mustafa Amhaouch on the promotion of sustainable food production in Africa (Parliamentary Paper, House of Representatives, 2021/22, 34 952, no. 166); and motion submitted by MPs Mustafa Amhaouch and Jan Klink on including closer agricultural trade relations between the Netherlands and Africa in the Africa strategy (Parliamentary Paper, House of Representatives, 2021/22, 34 952, no. 168).



Photocredits: Sven Torfinn

The Challenge Fund for Youth Employment

The Challenge Fund for Youth Employment is aimed at creating future prospects for 200,000 young people (half of whom are women) by investing in decent jobs and incomes in regions such as the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and North Africa. In conjunction with the business sector and other stakeholders, initiatives are being developed to teach digital and soft skills, for example, to young people. Actively involving young people in the programme allows us to take their ideas and wishes into account and work with them to enhance their economic prospects.

3.1.2 Economic ties and the African Continental Free Trade Area

The AU is working towards an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will become the world's largest free trade zone. According to the World Bank, this free trade zone could lift 30 million Africans out of poverty, offering market opportunities to both African and Dutch businesses. The Netherlands is supporting the AfCFTA through a new Team Europe Initiative aimed at working with the AfCFTA secretariat to help it operationalise the goal of increased trade. The AfCFTA is expected to provide a new framework for talks on economic relations on equal footing.

While the AfCFTA would only in the future provide a basis for a trade agreement with the EU, the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are currently our logical discussion partners. The Netherlands sees the added value of these RECs and is committed to further economic cooperation. In terms of trade promotion, trade facilitation and economic integration, RECs are important when it comes to setting common external tariffs and reaching joint agreements on imports and exports with countries within and outside the REC. The Netherlands is working with countries in East and West Africa to further develop various trade corridors.

Trade relations with Africa are currently governed either by the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)¹⁰ or by a bilateral agreement such as an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).¹¹ The Netherlands

¹⁰ Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 22 112, no. 3586.

¹¹ EPAs are asymmetric trade agreements that offer African countries favourable trading conditions, such as immediate

is working hard to reach further agreements with, among others, African countries on strengthening bilateral trade relations, including with countries that no longer fall within the GSP. We are pressing particularly for EPAs that promote sustainable trade and development with individual countries or groups of countries.¹² We are also concentrating on renegotiating investment protection agreements on the basis of an earlier model text.^{13 14}

While promoting investment in Africa, it is also essential to remain focused on creating enabling conditions for such investment. This includes combating corruption and promoting sound financial management and the rule of law (see also 3.2.2 and 3.4.4).

There are vast differences between Africa and the EU when it comes to economic influence, economic integration, employees' level of education, the level of union density and the sustainability of supply chains. We acknowledge these differences, and together we are looking for ways to overcome them.

3.1.3 Sustainable and responsible trade and value chains

The BHOS policy document notes that the government aims to support companies in engaging in responsible business conduct (RBC), work towards a trade system that works better for developing countries, and promote trade between Africa and the EU through trade facilitation programmes.

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises still set the parameters for Dutch RBC policy.¹⁵ Application of these guidelines and of current and future RBC legislation ensure that companies identify and address risks to people and the environment in their value chains. This also applies to risks in Dutch companies' value chains that extend to African countries. An RBC support office has been set up to help Dutch businesses and their African partners with the application of voluntary standards and current and future legislation.¹⁶ A grant scheme has also been established for this purpose, providing support for businesses in a particular sector that seek to work together on the six steps of due diligence set out in the OECD guidelines. The government is also committed to ensuring that producing countries benefit from expected European legislation to make trade and production chains more sustainable.

In support of this RBC policy, the Netherlands will continue to support producers and stakeholders (civil society organisations and public authorities) in Africa in making value chains more sustainable, with development cooperation programmes and partnerships, such as the Sustainable Trade Initiative, Solidaridad, the Trade Union Co-financing Programme (TUCP), Power of Voices Partnerships, the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), RVO's Fund against Child Labour (or a successor instrument) and Fund for Responsible Business, and programmes with international partners, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its International Training Centre.

Boosting trade is important to enhance economic growth and competitiveness. The Netherlands can help local companies meet EU standards. For developing countries, obtaining help with gaining market access is major theme. As well as presenting new opportunities, these new European and other requirements on sustainability, RBC and food safety are also posing challenges for Africa. Africa often regards our demands concerning protection of the environment, people, consumers and long-term economic development as a unilateral imposition of trade regulations, and thus protectionism. The Netherlands is therefore keen to consider, through a process of open dialogue, the perspective of African countries in the development and implementation of import and export rules. For example, the Netherlands contributes to the World Trade

tariff- and quota-free access for products to the EU. More far-reaching supplementary agreements can also be made regarding issues such as services, investment, trade and sustainable development.

¹² The House of Representatives is regularly informed on trade agreements by means of progress reports, which are submitted together with the annotated agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council (Trade).

¹³ Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 34952, no. 32.

¹⁴ Appendix to Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 21 501-02, no. 2619.

¹⁵ Motion submitted by MP Alexander Hammelburg regarding OECD guidelines for RBC and the Africa strategy (Parliamentary Paper, House of Representatives, 2021/22, 34952, no. 164)

¹⁶ <https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/imvo-steunpunt> (in Dutch).

Organization (WTO) Standards and Trade Development Facility, which provides technical assistance to African countries on meeting food safety standards for exports to the EU and other markets. Furthermore, the Netherlands ensures that the standpoints of developing countries are included in international agreements and legislation. In this way, the Netherlands contributes to a system in which businesses in developing countries are better able to participate in the international trade system.

The government will make greater efforts to help developing countries boost their export opportunities, for instance by offering logistical solutions. The same goes for flanking policy on, for example, capacity building in order to continue and expand market access for African businesses in the future. The CBI is particularly important in this respect, assisting African companies in 17 African countries with their exports to the EU.

3.1.4 Accessing critical raw materials and making supply chains sustainable

Sustainable supply chains are at the heart of the Netherlands' commitment to help African countries increase their share in sustainable value chains with the EU and, at the same time, safeguard access for the Netherlands and the EU to critical raw materials. In its National Raw Materials Strategy, the government detailed an action plan to secure the supply of critical raw materials, in which sustainability of extraction, processing and trade is an essential condition. The European Commission recently published a proposal for a Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) which dovetails with this approach.

The energy transition and associated green technologies are raising global demand for critical raw materials such as lithium, cobalt and rare earth metals. For many of these substances, the EU depends on the import of extracted and processed raw materials and semi-finished products from third countries. The available supply of critical raw materials in Africa makes the continent a major player in the value chains for green technology and presents an economic opportunity for those countries in which these critical raw materials can be extracted and processed. Due to growing global demand, including from Europe, diversification of supply is essential, and so too, therefore, are relations with African countries in this area. The Netherlands is pressing within the EU and other international forums for equal partnerships with resource-rich countries in Africa. Promoting a just energy transition and making raw materials supply chains more sustainable are the points of departure in this regard. Strategic partnerships also provide tools for preventing and mitigating problems that often plague the mining industry, including corruption, child labour and sexual violence, environmental pollution and loss of biodiversity. Furthermore, the Netherlands is investing in the sustainability of other primary chains, such as the transformation of the cocoa sector in West Africa. Here we are combining productivity growth, biodiversity conservation, diversification and better access to funding. This should result in better jobs with a living wage and put an end to deforestation and child labour.

The government is also a proponent of EU and bilateral raw materials partnerships with resource-rich African and other countries. The EU is seeking to establish itself as a preferred partner for resource-rich countries and producers, which means that European players need to obtain a licence to operate by performing well in terms of environmental and social responsibility requirements. In its non-paper¹⁷ on the CRMA, the Netherlands calls upon the European Commission to provide support for producers in and governments of resource-rich developing countries on the basis of their stated priorities. We recognise that African countries will increasingly seek to link the purchase of raw materials with investment and cooperation on local processing and production, and with an enabling environment, for example in the form of infrastructure. This will help them to add value themselves within the supply chain. We are therefore working at EU level to ensure that strategic mining, refining and processing projects can also take place in African countries. This will contribute to the diversification of our supply and strengthen our share in the value chains of critical raw materials. Besides the EU Global Gateway initiative, which plays a major role here, we are also working through Dutch partners such as FMO, Invest International, Atradium DSB and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO). The government therefore supports the focus in the European CRMA proposal on mutual benefits and local addition of value in European raw materials partnerships.

¹⁷ [NL+non-paper+on+the+Action+Plan+on+Critical+Raw+Materials+and+the+Critical+Raw+Materials+Act.pdf \(minbuza.local\)](#).



Photocredits: George Osodi/Panos Pictures

As part of its programme-based approach in the National Raw Materials Strategy and the mandate for the Strategic Dependencies Task Force, the Netherlands will determine what action we take within and in addition to the European raw materials partnerships. This may include new or deeper bilateral partnerships and will be based on further analysis of specific Dutch vulnerabilities, the interests and expertise of the Dutch business sector, the ambitions and priorities of partner countries, and the embedding of raw materials partnerships in the Netherlands' broader relations with resource-rich countries.

3.1.5 Just and inclusive energy transition

The Netherlands is investing in just and inclusive energy transitions worldwide; close cooperation between Europe and Africa offers major opportunities in this respect. For instance, Africa has great potential for renewable energy sources, both for meeting its own needs and for export, for example in the form of green hydrogen. Investment in green energy will foster a more robust economy and more jobs and will move us closer to universal access to modern, affordable, reliable and renewable energy, in Africa as well as Europe. The EU's connectivity strategy (see Box 2) could contribute significantly in this area. FMO, for example, has current investments amounting to €4.25 million in African countries that could contribute to this greening process.

Hydrogen

Invest International has provided a loan, based on a working capital guarantee from Atradius DSB, to engineering company Proton Ventures for the construction of a new plant to produce green ammonia and hydrogen from clean energy sources in Morocco.

In the BHOS policy document 'Do What We Do Best', the government announced a doubling of the Netherlands' renewable energy ambitions. It aims to give 100 million people access to renewable energy between 2015 and 2030. Development cooperation will be used to tackle the lack of basic energy supplies, including both electricity and clean cooking. The Netherlands is also working on a new action plan involving direct support for the poorest and most vulnerable households in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Together with other European countries (in Team Europe Initiatives), with local partners and with local authorities, the Netherlands is encouraging the creation of green jobs on the way to a circular, green economy with more opportunities for women and young people. It is precisely investment in training, skills and jobs that can promote sustainable climate choices.

3.1.6 Safe, inclusive digitalisation

Growing digitalisation presents vast opportunities for and in Africa. Digitalisation cuts costs in the long term and generates economic opportunities and jobs. It also helps make social and health services more accessible, provided it is linked to policies which ensure that digitalisation reaches all layers of society. Digital services create lasting change in the way people relate to each other and manage their affairs, and in how African governments and their citizens communicate with each other.

In order to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital transition and to mitigate the accompanying risks, substantial investment is needed in digital infrastructure as well as network coverage, digital inclusion and cybersecurity. Digital inclusion relates to digital skills and access to digital services and resources, such as EdTech and e-Health, particularly for women and girls. Cybersecurity concerns the protection of the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information systems, and is necessary for a stable society and for sustainable and forward-looking economic development.

The Netherlands seeks to work with African governments and stakeholders in UN processes to step up cooperation on issues such as security in cyberspace, cybercrime and the Global Digital Compact as part of the Summit of the Future. On the one hand, close cooperation is essential to ensure that the outcomes of these processes are in line with the priorities of African society. On the other, the EU and Africa need each other in order to implement international agreements. This involves ensuring sufficient capacity to adopt and implement legislation that guarantees security, inclusion and the accessibility of digital services and respects basic human rights. In the field of education and science, African and Dutch interests converge on topics such as open science (including open access) and digitalisation.

The Netherlands will ideally address challenges in the realm of digital and physical infrastructure at EU level, via Team Europe Initiatives, the Global Gateway programme and the Digital for Development (D4D) Hub.

Digital for Development Hub

The Netherlands is a member of the European Digital for Development (D4D) Hub and is working within it to set up activities that foster digital connectivity as part of the Global Gateway programme. More specifically, these activities focus on topics such as digital infrastructure, the green and digital transitions, digital innovation ecosystems and the role of the private sector. These activities are being developed through co-creation with African partners and are aimed at a people-centred, inclusive digital transition in African countries.

Box 2. The EU connectivity strategy: Global Gateway and Team Europe

With its connectivity strategy, [Global Gateway](#), the EU seeks to establish its own distinctive external strategy and investment agenda over the period 2021-2027. The strategy is based on core principles such as high-quality standards, good governance and transparency, equal partnerships and sustainability, and the EU seeks to use it to offer a democratic alternative worldwide. The strategy identifies five priority investment areas: digital connectivity, climate and energy, transport, health, and education and research. Such investments encompass hard infrastructure, capacity-building for sectoral reform and enhancement of the investment climate.

In line with the Team Europe approach, Global Gateway incorporates joint EU programming (the [Team Europe Initiatives](#)) as well as bilateral programmes of individual member states. Besides public funding, it is also aimed specifically at public-private partnerships. For example, the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) provides extensive guarantees for private sector investment. The Dutch development bank is expected to use some 15% of the EFSD+ guarantees to mobilise private investment.

Global Gateway is more than a development instrument; it is also a strategy for pursuing geopolitical and geo-economic interests. At the EU-AU Summit in February 2022, the EU announced a Global Gateway investment package in Africa worth €150 billion. In implementing its Africa Strategy, BHOS policy document, Global Climate Strategy and Global Health Strategy, the Netherlands will be seeking synergy with Global Gateway programming.

3.2 Security and stability

Aims:

- Promote good, inclusive governance and transparency as a basis for legitimacy, legal certainty and broad-based social development in Africa.
- Promote stability, peace and security as essential conditions for socioeconomic and political development in Africa.
- Increase security at Europe's external borders and prevent violent, cross-border extremism.
- Safeguard civic space as a condition for inclusive societies and attainment of the UN SDGs.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the multilateral order to secure improved economic, political and security agreements, in Africa and worldwide.

3.2.1 Working together on peace and security

The prevention of insecurity is always more desirable and a better investment than cure, so the Netherlands and the EU have a common interest with African countries in combating and containing conflict, violent (cross-border) extremism, and terrorism. Other destabilising factors include coups d'état, disinformation campaigns, the supply of arms to autocratic regimes and the presence of private military organisations. Building on the Africa-EU Partnership, the Netherlands contributes multilaterally wherever possible to efforts to prevent or combat instability. It also continues contributing to missions that promote stability and the international legal order, the importance of which is underlined by lessons learned from the MINUSMA evaluation.

The Netherlands believes in taking a comprehensive approach to conflict as a condition for lasting stability. Dutch international counterterrorism and security policy is also based on an integrated, balanced approach. This means that we are specifically focusing on addressing the root causes of conflict and on preventing terrorist threats, while at the same time reducing terrorism and promoting the rule of law both locally (including safeguarding human rights) and internationally. We collaborate with a variety of security and other actors, as well as local civil society stakeholders, including organisations actively involved in tackling these root causes. In accordance with its feminist foreign policy, the Netherlands is contributing to the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Practical implementation of these efforts takes place partly on the basis of the fourth Dutch

National Action Plan on Resolution 1325.¹⁸

Some countries in Africa are embroiled in an existential conflict with violent extremist groups. The national authorities in those countries are barely able to guarantee the safety of civilians in the capital cities, let alone in remote areas. In these situations too, a comprehensive approach is vital, and it is important to remain in dialogue with the authorities, even if we are not like-minded on all points. In our security and counterterrorism collaboration with the authorities of these African countries, we are trying to break the conflict cycle (taking a conflict-sensitive approach). We are also supporting local security actors with capacity building, professionalisation and accountability.

Lastly, the Netherlands seeks to work with local actors in tackling cross-border crime, including people smuggling and human trafficking, as well as trafficking in arms, drugs and illicit goods. The potential impact of these criminal activities on Europe and the Netherlands is considerable, and a collaborative and coordinated approach is vital in this regard.

¹⁸ NAP1325-IV ([Letter to parliament, December 2020](#)).



Box 3. African initiatives for peace, security and stability

The AU's Agenda 2063 envisages 'a peaceful and secure Africa', in which the AU and African nations are able to guarantee peace on the continent and protect civilians and their interests. Africa is building an African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The AU's African Peace and Security Council generates support for African peace operations and other military interventions and requests a clear mandate from the UN Security Council. African peace support operations often have advantages compared to NATO or UN interventions. The Netherlands actively supports the development of the AGA/APSA. Furthermore, as part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), a US programme, the Netherlands is training African forces in preparation for their deployment in UN and AU peace missions. In this way the programme enhances the operational and training capabilities of countries that contribute to peace missions, enabling more effective execution of the mandate. In addition, the AU is working with the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) to build continent-wide expertise on terrorism and instability.

At political level, the AU is working to create incentives for countries to preserve or return to the democratic process, for example by setting up an internal sanctions regime. The Netherlands is actively contributing by supporting civil society and non-governmental organisations that are involved in this work.

3.2.2 Effective and inclusive governance at national and local level

Poverty is becoming increasingly concentrated in Africa's unstable and conflict-stricken areas. Stability and security are vitally important in allowing people – particularly young people – the opportunity to contribute to Agenda 2063. They also determine how successful the Netherlands can be in – and as a partner to – Africa. To this end, the Netherlands will continue, in conjunction with the EU, to invest in peaceful, just and inclusive societies on the continent of Africa. We are investing in human security, access to justice, peacebuilding and effective and inclusive national and local governance. With our knowledge and expertise, we are seen internationally as a strong partner in the fields of rule-of-law development and the promotion of access to justice.

In recent years, various African countries have experienced coups d'état or have seen democracy jeopardised in other ways. A changing political context may require adjustments to efforts relating to security and the rule of law. At the same time, we will continue to seek dialogue with these countries, ideally through the EU. The question then is whether and to what extent we can continue to work with a central government, and whether our activities can still help strengthen and shape inclusive governance and the rule of law. For instance, we will seek greater collaboration with civil society, or with authorities at decentralised or technical level. There may also be good reason to continue collaboration and dialogue with national governments of countries where democracy is under pressure, for example to prevent further deterioration of the security situation or avoid a situation in which such countries drift into the sphere of influence of competing geopolitical players.

In the current climate of increasing geopolitical tensions, it is in any event important to support local authorities in fulfilling their growing role in the pressing challenges of our time, including urbanisation, migration, inclusion, climate issues, the energy transition and sustainable economic development. Increasing urbanisation means that there is a special role here for cities. When it comes to searching for solutions and running programmes to tackle urban development challenges like unemployment and sustainability, cities in the Netherlands and Africa thus have a crucial role to play. In some cases, links between large cities on the two continents have existed for decades. Nowadays, we regularly see new functional relationships that are better suited to the current climate than more traditional city links. Worldwide urban networks are also specifically involved here.

3.2.3 Safeguarding civic space, human rights and inclusion

The Netherlands shares the vision of the AU's Agenda 2063 that sufficient civic space is essential to societies in which people can achieve their potential. A diverse and powerful civil society contributes to good governance and security, the observance of human rights, balanced climate, water and food-security policy and sustainable and social entrepreneurship. The UN's SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063 cannot be achieved without broad social engagement. Civil society organisations play a significant role in highlighting the negative side effects of activities by international – including Dutch – businesses. Above all, a self-assured civil society gives a voice to engaged citizens as well as the disadvantaged in society, thus fostering more inclusive development.

The Netherlands will therefore continue to focus on and invest in promoting a self-assured civil society that will take its rightful place between government, the public and the business community. In practical terms, this means supporting and protecting civil society organisations, democratic institutions, the free press, trade unions, women's and youth organisations, and human rights organisations and defenders. Such support is much needed, given that civic space is in decline in many countries because of repressive government actions. Popular calls for a different social contract are growing louder, but the response of governments tends to be non-existent or insufficient. Many young people do not feel heard or involved in decisions, and respect for their rights is coming under increasing pressure.

We will adapt our collaboration with civil society organisations to fit the local situation (history, social contract, unionisation rate, etc.). We are aware that values important to the Netherlands may cause friction with African interlocutors. In the equal relationship to which the Netherlands aspires, fair and



open discussion is required about sensitive social issues. Our starting point is the protection of fundamental and human rights, while being mindful of the fact that not all rights can be applied everywhere as quickly or in the same way. The Netherlands seeks to connect with advocacy that receives support in a given context, and aims to be flexible in that regard.¹⁹

While recognising the Netherlands' and Europe's own imperfections in this area, we are specifically calling for attention to the inclusion of women, young people and marginalised groups including religious minorities and LGBTIQ+ people. Generally speaking, women and girls and LGBTIQ+ people all over the world experience – to differing degrees – the effects of inequality. Giving more people equal opportunities will contribute to a secure, stable and prosperous world. After all, a major cause of conflict is structural inequality, including gender inequality. Feminist foreign policy is based on the premise that promoting gender equality results in greater inclusion, economic prosperity and national security. This policy thus increases the effectiveness of Dutch foreign policy as a whole. In the interests of meaningful youth participation, we are expanding our collaboration with youth advisory committees. We also consider the creative sector of great importance for social engagement, self-expression and employment, particularly for young people.

A specific issue that political and civil society organisations in both Africa and the Netherlands are engaged with is Europe's colonial past and its role in the history of slavery. The current debate in the Netherlands about institutional racism cannot be dissociated from this past or from the conceptions that have arisen in this context. A good relationship between Africa and Europe, which builds on the long history between the two continents with acknowledgement and mutual respect, is therefore more important than ever. Dialogue, exchange and cooperation in respect of this shared past present opportunities for deepening the relationship and for a shared future. In this connection, the Netherlands will focus its efforts on such issues as cultural heritage restitution.

Cultural diplomacy

Since 2022, the number of cultural diplomacy countries in Africa has grown from three to five. A dialogue has been opened with Nigeria regarding the restitution of the Benin Bronzes. Partnerships with academic institutions and museums on colonial heritage will also be initiated with a number of countries (including Nigeria and South Africa).

3.2.4 Effective multilateralism

Investing in an equal relationship with Africa means that the Netherlands will work in partnerships with African countries wherever possible. This applies to bilateral relations as well as collaboration within multilateral institutions and regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa.

In the Netherlands' bilateral relations with African countries, working in equal partnerships will be a growing focus of international cooperation, where we are committed to breaking the traditional donor-recipient relationship. We will give more weight to the insights of local stakeholders in determining the causes of structural poverty and conflict, and in formulating answers to these problems. We will work to improve access for African organisations to our funding instruments. This change in development cooperation policy, whereby more funding and decisions lie with African partners and young people are more involved in policymaking and implementation, is one of the six practices highlighted in the BHOS policy document 'Do What We Do Best'.

The Netherlands and many African countries set great store by effective multilateralism. However, African countries feel increasingly underrepresented in multilateral organisations. Their representation is determined by historical rather than contemporary demographic and geopolitical relations, making it impossible to adequately promote African interests. The topic of peace and security is a good example, given

¹⁹ Government response to AIV advisory report: 'Human Rights: A Core Interest in the Current Geopolitical Context', 14 October 2022 (BZDOC-1235421577-13).

that more than half of UN Security Council resolutions concern Africa. For the UN and other multilateral organisations to maintain their legitimacy, it is vital that they operate more inclusively on the multilateral stage, which is why the closing statement of the EU-AU Summit in 2022 stated that EU countries would support various UN reform processes. At the same time, this provides an opportunity to ask African countries to help defend that multilateral order. In addition, the Netherlands will focus extra effort on achieving equal access for young people to multilateral institutions and forums.

The same issue of representation and ownership arises in the international financial institutions (IFIs). Providing more space for dialogue with African countries in IFIs, including the World Bank, can increase the sense of ownership of these institutions as well. The Netherlands will work to involve African countries more effectively in determining the priorities of IFIs at annual meetings and in decisions on capital increases and resource replenishments.

Working in partnerships could also be an effective format when collaborating with the different African RECs. Besides their economic value (see 3.1.2), the Netherlands sees added value in collaboration on various REC mandates in the political and security domains. RECs can play a significant role in imposing sanctions prompted by unlawful seizures of power and in tackling terrorism in, for example, West Africa (Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS) and Mozambique (Southern African Development Community, SADC).

Lastly, the Netherlands seeks to enhance multilateral cooperation with Africa on human rights, and women's rights in particular. In keeping with Agenda 2063, we are seeking greater cooperation with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on these issues. We will also try to strengthen practical, reciprocal cooperation in multilateral forums. We will do so, on the one hand, by seeking a meeting of minds on issues that are important for the group of African countries, such as discrimination and racism, and, on the other, by addressing topics that are important to the Netherlands, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), women's rights and equality for and rights of LGBTIQ+ people and religious and other minorities.

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3.3 Migration, reception and return

Aims:

- Promote effective and sustainable cooperation to prevent irregular migration and facilitate return to country of origin in the event of illegal residence.
- Collaborate within broad migration partnerships for which a wide range of policy instruments are deployed: diplomatic efforts, development cooperation, trade promotion, visas, cooperation on border management and measures to combat people smuggling and human trafficking, and potentially options for legal migration.
- Facilitate regular mobility appropriate to working in partnerships and economic cooperation founded on equality.
- Establish sustainable reception of refugees and displaced persons in the region on the basis of self-reliance. Crucial factors in this regard are socioeconomic inclusion in national systems and strengthening of local resilience, with due consideration and support for host communities.
- Promote an integrated approach to humanitarian support, development cooperation and peacebuilding.

3.3.1 Migration cooperation

Migration is an issue on which the Netherlands and Europe could achieve better results by working with Africa on a more equal footing. The Netherlands is therefore seeking effective, sustainable cooperation in this area, on the basis of respect and mutual interests. The Netherlands aims to develop such cooperation with African partners within the framework of international and European law. Equal migration partnerships would allow a more equitable discussion about, on the one hand, regular migration and mobility and, on the other, measures to combat irregular migration, prevent transit, facilitate return and adequately manage migration flows.

The dialogue about the frameworks for regulating migration and mobility will not be simple and will not always yield immediate results. It is important to root this dialogue in a broader relationship, so the Netherlands will invest additional resources across the full spectrum of its bilateral relations with major countries of origin and transit, in order to create a solid basis for enhanced migration partnerships with those countries. This means working to step up cooperation on migrant returns as well as to combat irregular migration, human trafficking and people smuggling through, for example, capacity building, operational cooperation and missions and operations. We will also work within the EU to promote sustainable and equal cooperation.

By far the most African migrants move within the continent, with only a small percentage attempting to reach Europe by irregular means. Nevertheless, the Mediterranean sea routes to Europe are the most deadly migration routes in the world. For the Netherlands, it is essential to make progress on curbing this irregular migration to Europe, on returning migrants to their country of origin in the event of illegal residence, and also on protecting vulnerable migrants, thus reducing the number of victims on this migration route (working partly through the Team Europe Initiatives concerning the Mediterranean sea routes).

In turn, African countries expect to see progress on legal migration channels for highly skilled and labour migrants to the EU, including the issuing of visas for business exchanges and other forms of circular migration. The diaspora is a major factor for development in African countries, not only because of the regular remittances, but also because of new entrepreneurship on the part of the latest diaspora generation, who are particularly keen to seek opportunities in Africa. Agreements on legal migration



could also be part of a partnership. We are looking at the experience of other EU member states in this area and at the added value of EU instruments.

Migration partnerships

We are developing migration partnerships with a number of African countries. Equality and reciprocity are at the heart of these partnerships. Together, we are working to curb irregular migration, cooperate on border management, combat people smuggling and human trafficking, facilitate migrant return and protect migrants. Partnerships can also include agreements on legal migration. This can be achieved through, for example, political dialogue, the exchange of knowledge and information on visa procedures, operational cooperation through the National Police or the Royal Military and Border Police, direct assistance for migrants in need through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and support for measures to combat human trafficking and people smuggling through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

3.3.2 Sustainable reception in the region

A sharp rise in the number of refugees and displaced persons in Africa is expected over the coming years, partly as a result of violent conflicts, increasing inequality and the impact of climate change. Most refugees stay in their region of origin, with limited prospects of a lasting solution, namely return, local integration or resettlement in a third country. Refugees' quality of life is largely determined by the stability (or lack thereof) of countries of origin and the willingness and capacity of host countries to offer displaced people a dignified existence. Current Dutch cooperation on reception in the region is therefore as timely as ever.

The Netherlands works with national and local authorities and local organisations in host countries, as well as with international organisations, to offer both refugees and vulnerable host communities the prospect of a dignified existence. Our focus is on boosting local resilience and self-reliance, promoting the socioeconomic inclusion of displaced persons in national systems and, at the same time, supporting host communities. These endeavours are designed to prevent further displacement and to reduce the need to undertake the long and hazardous journey to Europe. The Netherlands' efforts in this regard are in line with international agreements made in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

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3.3.3 Effective humanitarian response

To cope with the current and future needs of refugees and displaced persons, the humanitarian system needs to be more efficient, more effective and better able to anticipate future crises. The Netherlands therefore seeks to further strengthen its integrated approach to humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding in the future. Development cannot be sustainable without stability, and this can only be achieved if humanitarian and development actors are conflict-sensitive and address the root causes of conflict.

The Netherlands is working to achieve effective, efficient and transparent humanitarian assistance, promote compliance with international humanitarian law and ensure the provision of life-saving assistance. To design assistance more effectively and more efficiently and better reflect the interests of local and national actors, we are focusing our humanitarian efforts on 'locally led development'. This means actively involving regional, national and local actors in international humanitarian assistance. One practical consequence of such an approach is that local organisations gain access to and have a say in national and international coordination structures. We ensure that the voice of the target group (and particularly that of women and young people) is heard more clearly, and that this results in improved services. Here, we pay particular attention to the most vulnerable people, so as to promote and restore their resilience and human dignity. Key focal points in the Dutch humanitarian approach are food, water, care, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and preventing sexual misconduct by aid organisations and aid workers (Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment, SEAH).

It is becoming increasingly clear that the climate crisis is having major humanitarian repercussions, including the growing prevalence of famine, health crises, conflict and displacement. This means that

assistance urgently needs to be scaled up. In essence, however, the climate crisis is a development problem, given the overall negative impact of climate change on achieving the UN SDGs, and we are even seeing hard-won achievements being undone. Existing fragility, inequalities and vulnerabilities are being exacerbated, with all the implications that entails for stability and peace. Building up climate resilience and adaptation requires long-term solutions, major investment, local leadership and good – and inclusive – governance (see 3.4.2). Experiences with cash assistance, economic diversification, strengthening local and other institutions and social safety nets are being scaled up for greater impact and customised according to the local situation.

3.4 Poverty reduction, food security and inclusion

Aims:

- Reduce poverty, increase food security and accelerate overall progress on the ambitions of the AU's Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs.
- Boost climate resilience in Africa and a just climate transition.
- Combine trade, development cooperation and investment in order to achieve the UN SDGs and the goals of the Paris Agreement, while being mindful of each other's interests.
- Strengthen financial and institutional frameworks, in Africa and multilaterally, in order to achieve prosperity growth and the green transition.
- Actively involve Dutch research institutes and expertise in the pursuit of international UN SDGs and the Paris Agreement goals.

3.4.1 Poverty reduction, food security and inclusion

To achieve a prosperous, safe and inclusive Africa, continued commitment to the UN SDGs is vital. These goals will remain the pre-eminent framework for Dutch development efforts in, and together with, Africa in the coming years. We will also continue to invest in reaching the most marginalised groups, including children, and amplifying their voice through civil society organisations. The Dutch BHOS instruments, as detailed in the policy document 'Do What We Do Best', are available for this purpose. The Netherlands focuses on the private sector where possible and the public sector where necessary. It believes in equal partnerships with greater influence from African organisations as a method for achieving maximum development impact. The Netherlands has therefore made an international commitment that its development cooperation efforts will be channelled primarily through African organisations, and only where necessary through Dutch or European organisations. Furthermore, knowledge institutions work in many domains with partners in Africa, for the purpose not only of transferring knowledge but also of collaborating on an equal basis in order to build up our collective knowledge.

The Netherlands supports a large number of countries in Africa in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Our aid is focused on marginalised groups, especially young children and their mothers. We are also working to sustainably increase the consumption of healthy diets by the very poorest, partly by supporting national programmes for social protection. In addition, we are supporting programmes for small farmers, who are improving their business operations partly through greater legal certainty surrounding land and its use, and access to inputs (such as seeds or soil improvers), funding and knowledge.²⁰

²⁰ Letter to parliament on a step-by-step plan for global food security, 23 December 2022 (BZDOC-878297580-40).



Photocredits: Tempura by Getty Images

Supporting small farmers

Through the ProARIDES programme (implemented by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR), the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and CARE), the Netherlands is helping to increase the resilience, food security and incomes of more than two million small-scale arable and livestock farmers in the Sudano-Sahel region of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The aim of this 10-year programme is to enhance local food systems, improve market access, promote sustainable management of natural resources such as land and water, foster inclusion of women and young people and help improve local and national governance in order to restore the social contract between government and the people. To achieve this, ProARIDES works closely with local partners, national and regional farmers' organisations, local authorities and research institutes in the three countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have shown how a global crisis can have a major direct impact on food supplies in parts of Africa. In response to these recent crises, various African countries have expressed a desire to reduce their dependence on global markets. They want to reduce food imports and focus more on their own food production. The Netherlands is willing and able to support Africa in this endeavour with our knowledge, expertise and institutions relating to food security and land use.²¹ We are also making considerable investments through multilateral organisations such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and by means of global research by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). This research is largely focused on food systems in Africa and is supported through a partnership with Dutch research organisations.

The Netherlands is continuing to invest in improved river basin management – locally, nationally and internationally – and in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The Netherlands has an internationally recognised pioneering role in the field of WASH, thanks in part to its role as co-chair of the International

²¹ Motion submitted by MPs Joris Thijssen and Suzanne Kröger on securing the goals in view in future strategies (Parliamentary Paper, House of Representatives, 2022/23, 38180, no. 15).

High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa. The Netherlands contributes through the Continental Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP) to measures addressing systemic and funding challenges.

The Netherlands also continues to champion sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). We are working with governments, UN organisations and civil society organisations to improve African health systems and ensure better access to primary healthcare, accurate information, freedom of choice and access to contraception and safe abortions. The Netherlands is focusing particular attention on young people, women and marginalised groups such as LGBTIQ+ people. Improved access to SRHR leads to greater freedom of choice for women, which contributes to their economic independence, greater social mobility and reduced child mortality. This in turn contributes to gender equality.

The challenges involved in achieving gender equality remain significant, especially when it comes to economic and political participation and gender-based violence. The Netherlands is helping to prevent, respond to and end gender-based violence. The secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, economic stability, food and nutrition security, mental health and political and social stability have left women and girls disproportionately marginalised. This makes the work of organisations active in many African countries to keep inclusion of women and girls on the agenda all the more important. The Netherlands is a major partner for those organisations.

Box 4: Health and pandemics

Health is an integral part of sustainable development. International cooperation on this issue has a great potential positive impact on diplomatic relations, gender equality, employment, trade and socioeconomic development. The COVID-19 pandemic showed the risks of existing health inequalities worldwide. A new global agreement is therefore being developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), to prevent and control future pandemics. This process is being chaired by the Netherlands and South Africa.

The threat of new pandemics is reinforced in Africa in particular due to several simultaneous processes: climate change, rapid urbanisation and changes in land use. The impact on the disease burden in Africa is significant because of existing pandemics and resistant infectious diseases. At the same time, health in Africa is inextricably linked to health in the rest of the world. Africa is organising its approach to these issues with the establishment of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the African Medicines Agency. Support for these agencies contributes to African independence. . With a focus on coherence, the Netherlands, partly through Team Europe Initiatives, is working to promote sustainable local production of and fair global access to health products. In this context, the Netherlands is hosting the WHO World Local Production Forum in 2023.

3.4.2 Contributing to Africa's climate resilience

The strong and prosperous Africa advocated in the AU's Agenda 2063 can only be achieved if urgent consideration is given to climate change (mitigation, adaptation and finance).²² The next few years will be pivotal in determining whether or not the Paris Agreement goals are met. Within Europe, the Netherlands seeks to take its share of responsibility for developing measures to combat global warming, a process that will require effective EU-Africa cooperation. In the interests of an equal relationship, the Netherlands wants to contribute to this cooperation, and at the same time substantially reduce our international carbon footprint. Scientific cooperation between the Netherlands and African partners on climate resilience will be essential in this respect.

Africa expects Europe to ensure a just climate transition, access to adaptation funding, financing for loss and damage and an approach to implementing the European Green Deal that does not lead to the de facto closure of the European market. As stated in its Global Climate Strategy, the Netherlands aims to double our public adaptation funding. This is specifically intended to reach the most vulnerable people

²² [The Netherlands' Global Climate Strategy | Publication | Government.nl.](#)

who are hardest hit by climate change and to offer them the prospect of steady, sustainable development. At COP27, for instance, the Netherlands pledged the sum of €100 million for climate adaptation in Africa through a contribution to the Climate Action Window, an initiative of the African Development Bank (AfDB). We are also giving extra impetus to the development and funding of climate projects by the private sector, including follow-up to the successful Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD) managed by FMO.

Internationally, we are contributing to Just Energy Transition Partnerships, including the Partnership with South Africa. Furthermore, given the leading role we have assumed in adaptation funding, we are appealing to other countries to do more. In this way, the Netherlands is also helping to build mutual confidence in the international climate negotiations.

Africa has unique ecosystems and biodiversity. The Netherlands supports African efforts to promote sustainable management and protection of, for example, water, land, forests, wetlands and oceans, which form an important basis for sustainable food systems and inclusive socioeconomic development. For instance, the Netherlands is making extra investments in the Central African Forest Initiative and is contributing to the AU's Great Green Wall initiative. There are numerous opportunities for cooperation with African countries in the fields of biodiversity and pollution. The Netherlands is the largest core donor of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), based in Nairobi. The Netherlands is also actively engaged in international efforts to end global deforestation by 2030 and protect forest biodiversity. We are working, for example, to promote sustainable and deforestation-free agricultural raw materials supply chains, including via the Amsterdam Declarations Partnership (ADP) and ambitious EU legislation on deforestation-free production and consumption.

Climate change is a root cause of instability. The substantial impact of climate change in Africa is putting increasing pressure on natural resources such as land and water, forests and biodiversity, as well as mineral resources. This is leading to long-term intergenerational and interethnic tensions. Further tensions are arising between countries over access to transboundary water sources, grasslands and agricultural land and other ecological resources. We will take account of climate risks and climate resilience in our strategic contextual analyses, conflict analyses and programming. Moreover, the Netherlands is working to develop a conflict-sensitive and inclusive approach to climate adaptation efforts. This is essential in order to prevent climate maladaptation, a phenomenon in which adaptation efforts actually exacerbate tensions and conflict. The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (EIA) also supports the reinforcement of environmental assessment systems in Africa, in the interest of encouraging better investment decisions.

3.4.3 *Combining trade, development and investment*

In the BHOS policy document the Netherlands opted to seek greater synergy between our efforts to promote trade, investments and development in what are referred to as 'combination countries'. To this end we are working closely with the business sector, knowledge institutions and civil society. Eight of these combination countries are in Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa.

In these combination countries, we are setting up long-term 'combitracks' in sectors and subsectors where feasible, affordable and high-impact Dutch solutions can contribute on a large scale to the green and digital transitions. In South Africa, the Netherlands is seeking collaboration on the transition from coal to renewables by creating alternative employment in sustainable agriculture and by developing new economic opportunities based on hydrogen. In Nigeria, solar energy sector initiatives are being accelerated and scaled up for the benefit of the local horticultural sector and rural electrification. In both cases, investments by Dutch businesses are helping to make this possible.

When implementing a multiannual combitrack such as this, various instruments are used by embassies, RVO and Invest International in close collaboration to remove significant bottlenecks in the selected economic sectors. These include market and feasibility studies, demonstration projects, improvements in higher and vocational education, and investments. We are focusing our development cooperation



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resources in these eight countries more sharply on the economic sectors where there are win-win opportunities for Dutch businesses and their partners. Our foreign trade and development cooperation will thus be more mutually beneficial in these combination countries.

Integrated off-grid solar solutions in Nigeria

The 'integrated off-grid solar solutions in Nigeria' combitrack is a good example of a combination of trade opportunities for the Netherlands and economic development in Africa. This partnership increases access to solar energy in rural areas of Nigeria by further scaling up the supply of Dutch integrated solar energy solutions in collaboration with Nigerian partners. These small-scale energy networks are replacing expensive and polluting diesel generators and are helping to improve Nigerian agricultural production through irrigation powered by electricity, or refrigerated storage of agricultural products. There are currently not enough technicians in Nigeria capable of installing and maintaining these systems, so this partnership includes programmes aimed at building such capacities and vocational education, which will generate decent jobs and higher incomes more quickly.

3.4.4 Stronger financial and institutional frameworks in Africa and at multilateral level

Bringing about prosperity growth, meeting the sustainability challenge in Africa and achieving the SDGs will require major investment and funding. In 2020, UNCTAD estimated the continent's combined budget deficit to be \$200 billion a year (not including North Africa). In addition, high interest payments by African countries and large, partially non-transparent loans are increasingly causing financing problems and unsustainable debt, something that cannot be resolved by official development assistance (ODA) funds alone. A contribution from other financial flows is essential for this, including revenues from taxation, remittances from Europe to families back home, international climate funding and private finance, as well as measures to counter illicit financial flows. In order to make significant headway in the next 10 years, a combination of institutional and financial efforts will be vital.

With regard to the debt problem, the Netherlands' contribution is aimed at greater transparency and effective financial management. The Netherlands is working to improve implementation of international

agreements on debt sustainability (such as the Common Framework for Debt Treatments) and is urging multilateral organisations to address the growing use of complex debt structures. Cooperation from creditors such as China as well as private actors, the main creditors in many countries, is a prerequisite for lasting solutions.

The Netherlands will also press for a level playing field for all participants in UN and multilateral development bank contract award procedures. State-owned companies should be prevented from having an unfair advantage in this respect. Not only should price be a consideration, but quality and expertise criteria should carry much more weight.

The Netherlands also seeks to help combat illicit international financial flows, including those linked to corruption, tax evasion, money laundering, terrorist funding and organised crime. The annual outflow resulting from illicit financial flows and tax avoidance is estimated to be in the region of \$90 billion. These financial flows hinder efforts to achieve the SDGs because they reduce the available public resources of African governments, undermine security and the rule of law and exacerbate global inequality. Even financial flows that are associated with tax avoidance and are not illegal in themselves can be at the expense of developing countries. Within the EU, the Netherlands is taking a leading role on the issue of tax avoidance. Our aim is to curb the use of the Netherlands as a conduit country for illicit financial flows and tax avoidance. We are also providing technical assistance to African countries in this regard.

The Netherlands also aims to provide technical support to African countries to help them structurally increase their own tax revenues and improve their management of public finances. For example, we are supporting the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF), the umbrella organisation for African tax administrations, and the IMF's Africa Regional Technical Assistance Centers (AFRITACs).

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The Netherlands is further concentrating on bilateral investment directed at climate adaptation and jobs where there is a lack of sound projects for private funding, through channels including the Dutch Good Growth Fund and FMO, including the sovereign wealth funds managed there. The Netherlands is promoting innovative financing to pay for development and mobilise private sector investment. For example, MASSIF, a government fund managed by FMO, issues loans in local currency to boost the resilience of local financial institutions and African SMEs to currency fluctuations.

Lastly, the Netherlands provides further financial resources through our contributions to multilateral development banks, including the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Because these organisations have a high credit rating, they are able to offer low-interest loans to African governments. Multilateral development banks help these countries with structural reforms, such as sectoral programmes, the integration of climate targets into their development programmes and the provision of technical assistance in project development.

Africa in numbers

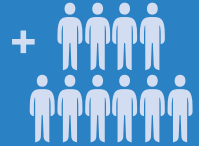
The 54 African countries together have 28% of the votes in the UN General Assembly.



Africa's land area covers more than 30 million km², the equivalent of Europe, the United States and China put together.



Africa's population will grow from 1.4 billion to 2.4 billion inhabitants between now and 2050, when 50% of the continent's population will be under 25.



The current GNP of all the African countries combined stands at almost \$3 trillion dollars, comparable to that of India. This figure is expected to increase sixfold by 2050, to \$17 trillion dollars. Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa have the largest economies on the continent.



The EU is Africa's main trading partner; conversely, Africa is the EU's fourth-largest trading partner (after the US, China and the UK), larger than Latin America and Japan. Trade with the African continent accounts for over 2% of total Dutch trade (2021).



Today's average EU inhabitant has a living standard eight times higher than the average inhabitant of the continent of Africa, and this is barely expected to change in the next decade.



It is estimated that, by about 2050, droughts and flooding will cost African countries \$50 billion a year.



Eight African countries qualify as being fully democratic (EIU 2022). Civic space is steadily shrinking; six countries are relatively open (in the Civicus Monitor's terms: 'open' or 'narrowed') while 30 countries have little or no civic space ('repressed' or 'closed').



In 2022, 130 million people in Africa were dependent on humanitarian aid.



Africa has 60% of the world's highest solar energy potential, but only 1% of the installed solar panels. Some 43% of the population still have no access to electricity.



People and resources

Diplomatic presence in Africa:



At the end of 2022, the Netherlands had embassies in 26 African countries, two consulates (Cape Town and Lagos) and two embassy offices (in N'Djamena and Goma).

In all, more than 800 staff posted abroad and local staff work at these missions, including 10 agricultural counsellors, seven defence attachés, four immigration liaison officers, two police attachés and one education and science attaché.

Dutch financial commitment:



The Africa Strategy is supported by resources from the thematic budgets, with a combination of ODA and non-ODA.

FMO's outstanding investment portfolio in Africa amounts to €4.25 billion (32% of the total portfolio).

Besides non-earmarked contributions to international organisations, international financial institutions and the European Union, the Netherlands spends more than €1 million a year on development of and in Africa (from ODA, excluding emergency aid). Dutch ODA spending in Africa will be monitored through the annual Homogeneous Budget for International Cooperation (HGIS). The Netherlands' financial commitment may be higher or lower depending on fluctuations in the available ODA budget.

The Netherlands is working to ensure that, in addition to investments from the central government budget, more and more Dutch companies will make substantial investments in Africa.



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Appendix 1. Action-based agenda for the Netherlands' Africa Strategy

The Africa Strategy provides coherence to policy aimed at enhancing cooperation with African countries, multilateral forums and African partners. This accompanying action-based agenda is designed to show how the strategy will be elaborated in the short term (horizon: this government's term of office), in the medium term (horizon: UN Agenda 2030) and in the long term (horizon: beyond 2030). This involves more specific elaboration in our partnership with Africa of thematic policy documents and their implementation frameworks.

The action-based agenda consists of a representative selection of high-profile actions, be they multilateral, EU-level or bilateral. A gender lens, the priorities and outlines of feminist foreign policy together with the existing commitment stated and enshrined in the National Action Plan 1325-IV are integral elements of the actions listed below. Actions in the short term will logically impact on the medium and long term, and will therefore not be repeated automatically. In some cases, specific regions or countries are mentioned. In all cases, these actions will be detailed further as they are implemented, and will be included in Multiannual Country Strategies and annual plans. Follow-up, funding and monitoring will be part of regular implementation and accountability mechanisms, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and BHOS budgets and annual reports. The Africa Strategy does not have its own budget, and all actions will be financed and accounted for on the basis of the thematic policy and thematic budgets to which the action belongs. In this way, the strategy aims to avoid a proliferation of policies focusing on Africa.

Short term

Action:	Contributes to:
The Netherlands makes a structural investment in its relations with African countries and partners to further develop its efforts to achieve equal relationships (periodic political consultations, reciprocal visits, multilateral cooperation, equal dialogue and collaboration within the EU-AU Partnership, etc.).	Overall objectives
The Netherlands is committed to ensuring that specific Global Gateway projects are implemented in Africa, which will simultaneously achieve development results, allow the EU to strengthen joint action in Africa and facilitate more effective dialogue with African countries on cooperation priorities.	Overall objectives
Dialogue with African think-tanks will be deepened in policymaking and implementation.	Overall objectives
Equal economic development will be promoted by investing, in consultation with the Netherlands-Africa Trade Promotion Task Force, in multiannual opportunity programmes for Dutch businesses in priority African markets, by enhancing the business climate in African countries and by increasing synergy and coherence between our trade, development cooperation and investment policies. As in broader trade and investment relations between the Netherlands and African markets, Invest International and Atradius DSB will also play a key role here.	Equal economic development
Dutch businesses active in Africa apply the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and receive help in preparing for RBC legislation. Supplementary policy supports African producers in making the necessary adjustments.	Equal economic development
The Netherlands contributes through Team Europe Initiatives to the development of the African free trade zone in support of the African Continental Free Trade Area.	Equal economic development
Work at EU level fosters mutually beneficial cooperation and partnerships with resource-rich African countries focusing on sustainable extraction and processing of and bilateral trade in raw materials critical to the EU.	Equal economic development
Through the World Bank, the Netherlands helps to provide 300 million people with access to electricity via decentralised, renewable energy sources in Africa (Energy Sector Management Assistance Program 2021-2028)	Equal economic development
On the basis of its pioneering role in Europe, the Netherlands contributes to a sustainable digital transition in Africa, including by supporting the private sector with FinTech, e-commerce and services to farmers and entrepreneurs (men and women).	Equal economic development

Action:	Contributes to:
The Netherlands will work with a number of African countries to set up import chains for clean energy, in particular green hydrogen. This will involve the development of green hydrogen hubs that can help meet European and Dutch energy demand as well as contributing to sustainable economic growth on the ground in Africa.	Equal economic development, poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will improve its direct issue of visas in growth markets.	Equal economic development
A Dutch presence will be maintained in UN and EU missions in Africa to continue contributing to peacebuilding, reinforcement of security structures and protection of civilians.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
African regional and local partnerships will be strengthened, with a special focus on measures designed to eliminate root causes of violent extremism.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
The Netherlands will invest in bilateral cooperation on human security, access to justice, peacebuilding and inclusive governance in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali, Niger, Uganda, Somalia, Tunisia, South Sudan and the Great Lakes region.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
The Netherlands will explore opportunities for practical collaboration in multilateral human rights forums by seeking common ground on important issues, such as discrimination and racism, SRHR, women's rights, the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and religious and other minorities.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
On the basis of local ownership, the Netherlands will contribute on a structural basis to the development of civil society organisations in Africa.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
Cultural relations between the Netherlands and African countries will be strengthened (including heritage restitution).	Security, stability and inclusive governance
Together with the AU and African partners, the Netherlands seeks to enhance effective multilateralism and support for UN reform processes, for example by proactively exploring the considerations, perspectives and interests (shared or otherwise) of African and European countries.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
The Netherlands will shape enhanced migration cooperation with countries in Europe's neighbourhood (by means of bilateral agreements and through the EU).	Migration, reception and return
Through the Team Europe Initiatives for the West and Central Mediterranean migration routes, the Netherlands will work to strengthen partnerships with African countries, coordination of EU programming and effective joint policy on migration.	Migration, reception and return
Besides non-earmarked funding, the Netherlands will provide support for four humanitarian Country-based Pooled Funds: the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia (2023-2025).	Migration, reception and return
The Netherlands will support stronger African ownership of humanitarian aid (for example through an AU initiative), both bilaterally and via the EU.	Migration, reception and return
The Netherlands will put young people, women and minorities at the centre of its strategy to tackle poverty, particularly extreme poverty, along the lines of its feminist foreign policy, the UN SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
In line with AU aspirations and Dutch ambitions to increase locally led development, the Netherlands will work with partners in Ethiopia, Uganda, South Sudan and Niger to identify and address root causes of poverty and exclusion.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
Collaboration with African countries on climate adaptation will be enhanced by improved access to digital climate-smart technologies, investment in climate-resilient infrastructure, support for green entrepreneurship and the creation of green jobs.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
On the basis of multiannual opportunity programmes and combitracks for sustainability and digitalisation, cooperation via the business sector will be deepened by pursuing sustainable mutual economic development, employment and successful investments.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability, equal economic development

Action:	Contributes to:
We are working with 12 climate-vulnerable countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to make land use more sustainable, raise agricultural productivity and increase climate adaptation and/or resilience among small farmers.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will enhance water infrastructure in collaboration with nine countries in Africa, thereby supplying 3.5 million people with drinking water and sanitation by 2026.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will bring together partners for sustainable development and fair access to medicines and medical devices in the WHO World Local Production Forum.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
Within the EU, the Netherlands is working to combat tax avoidance and supports African countries on this issue.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will promote an international financial architecture of UN agencies and development banks that works for Africa and strengthens cooperation.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability

Medium term

Action:	Contributes to:
The Netherlands will work through the EU to achieve the UN SDGs in Africa by implementing the agreements of the 6th EU-AU Summit and the Global Gateway connectivity strategy.	Overall objectives
The Netherlands will deepen value chains aimed at integrating African and Dutch companies in processes of added value creation and sustainable production.	Equal economic development
The Netherlands will consolidate its cooperation with African countries and facilitate cooperation between them on the basis of their shared interest in preserving an open, free and safe digital domain and in striving for human-centred application of digital technologies.	Equal economic development
Knowledge collaboration between the Netherlands and Africa will be characterised by equality and reciprocal exchange.	Equal economic development
The Netherlands will support African and international initiatives to prevent further destabilisation of priority regions (Sahel, West African coastal states and the Horn of Africa), curb further expansion of terrorist groups and reduce instability.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
The Netherlands will help shape a structural dialogue with the AU on heritage restitution through UNESCO and the EU.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
The Netherlands advocates improved cooperation with African countries in multilateral institutions, bilaterally and through the EU.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
The Netherlands will work bilaterally and multilaterally with like-minded governments and organisations in and outside Africa to ensure that civil society organisations have access to the public debate.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
Migration and mobility between the EU and Africa are part of a coherent partnership.	Migration, reception and return
The Netherlands will work with host countries to make reception of refugees and displaced persons safe and sustainable.	Migration, reception and return
Development cooperation engagement in Africa will be guided by local demand, with safeguards in place for diversity, inclusion, equality and anti-racism in decision-making and in partnerships, and with greater influence from local and Southern organisations.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will invest in a combination of employment and modernised higher and vocational education aimed at improving the links between education and the labour market, including contributions to digital and other innovations, improvements in the position of women as producers, and the creative sector.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability

Action:	Contributes to:
Dutch and international financing instruments will be made greener in line with the climate goals and ecological sustainability.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will work with the World Bank, African national and local authorities and civil society organisations towards improved institutions, greater capacity and better (sustainable and inclusive) investments in the water sector.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will save 32 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa from malnutrition, increase the income and productivity of 8 million people, and ensure that 8 million hectares of land are managed and used sustainably for food production.	Prosperous and sustainable Africa and Europe
The Netherlands will follow up on the forthcoming WHO Pandemic Preparedness Treaty (2024), focusing on international cooperation with Africa, particularly to address the implications of urbanisation, climate change and food production.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability

Long term

Action:	Contributes to:
Building on regional economic integration and the Economic Partnership Agreements, a trade treaty between the EU and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will form the basis for economic cooperation and integration between the EU and Africa.	Equal economic development
The Netherlands will contribute to the just energy transition that is needed to achieve the goals of Agenda 2063.	Equal economic development
Through the Global Gateway connectivity strategy and bilateral investments in infrastructure (through Invest International), physical and digital connectivity between Africa and Europe will be structurally enhanced.	Equal economic development
The Netherlands will work with African partners to deepen raw materials supply chains and make them more sustainable, thus enabling African countries to generate added value and European countries to safeguard security of supply.	Equal economic development
In order to bring about a sustained decrease in violent extremism, the Netherlands will engage in structural cooperation with African countries that are able to ensure security and stability.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
To exert more influence on international and multilateral UN and other discussions and decision-making regarding cybersecurity, digitalisation and cybercrime, the Netherlands will collaborate on a long-term basis with African governments and stakeholders.	Security, stability and inclusive governance
The Netherlands will help design a coherent partnership between the EU and Africa on migration and mobility.	Migration, reception and return
Dutch development cooperation will be highly demand-driven, which means that the development potential in recipient countries will carry most weight (subject to future international frameworks for inclusive development), and that local actors will have a decisive say in the design of programmes.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will make a substantial contribution to national and international research, innovation development and capacity building to which Africa gives priority, with a view to bolstering healthy, climate-adaptive, productive, inclusive and sustainable food systems.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability
The Netherlands will support African countries' efforts to gain more autonomy in developing their plans for social development and health. This will be done, for example, by exchanging knowledge and experience on making healthcare more sustainable.	Poverty reduction, increased sustainability

Source:

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