

Policy Paper

Rethinking and Recalibrating EU-Africa Cooperation: Climate, Security, and Migration in a Shifting Global Order

Climate Diplomacy Outlook - July 2025





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Policy Summary

1. Shift Investments Towards Climate Resilience

- i. Increase climate adaptation funding for Africa to at least €10 billion annually by 2027, prioritizing water security, food systems, and desertification control.
- ii. **Expand the Global Gateway initiative** beyond infrastructure to include climate-smart agriculture, reforestation, and early-warning systems.
- iii. Invest in early warning systems for climate-related conflicts

2. Reform Migration Policies for Stability

- i. Shift at least 30% of migration-related funding towards job creation, skills development, and labor mobility schemes by 2030.
- ii. Expand **legal migration pathways** including work-study programs and labor agreements, **work-study visa programs** and **circular migration schemes** to reduce dangerous irregular migration.
- iii. Prioritize Localized, Sustainable Migration Solutions
- iv. **Regional Cooperation**, Collaborate with African nations to improve border management and protect the rights of migrants.

3. Strengthen Security Cooperation Beyond Military Assistance

- Support ECOWAS and AU-led peacekeeping with intelligence sharing and conflict prevention funding.
- o Build joint EU-African climate security task forces.
 - **Resource Allocation**: Increase funding for climate adaptation projects in vulnerable regions to address root causes of migration and instability.
- Capacity Building: Support local governance structures to enhance resilience against climate-induced shocks and reduce susceptibility to extremist exploitation.

4. Redefine Trade and Economic Partnerships

- i. Remove or **reduce EU agricultural subsidies** that distort African markets, fostering **fair trade partnerships** instead.
- ii. Move beyond extractive industries—support **Africa's green economy development**.
- iii. Strengthen EU-Africa partnerships in clean energy and technology transfer.
- iv. Support **Africa's local industries and value chains** rather than continuing to focus on raw material extraction.



Executive Summary

The intersection of climate change, security, and migration presents an urgent challenge for both the European Union (EU) and Africa. The EU's current approach to Africa is largely reactive, driven by crises rather than long-term strategic planning. This brief outlines why Europe's security future is inherently tied to Africa's stability and calls for a shift toward a proactive, cooperative security framework focused on climate resilience, migration management, and conflict prevention.

In the aftermath of the 2025 Munich Security Conference, Europe's foreign policy is at a pivotal juncture. Discussions underscored the intricate links between climate change, security, and migration, highlighting Africa's critical role in global stability. Despite this, the European Union's current strategies remain predominantly reactive, focusing on migration control rather than addressing underlying issues such as environmental degradation and food and economic insecurity.

Africa faces severe climate challenges, including **desertification in the Sahel, coastal erosion in West Africa**, and **extreme droughts in the Horn of Africa**. These environmental crises are catalysts for mass displacement and regional instability, with projections indicating that climate change could internally displace millions within African nations by 2050¹. The resultant food insecurity, exacerbated by climate shocks, is anticipated to escalate, potentially increasing the number of undernourished individuals in Africa from 282 million to 350 million by 2050².

While the EU allocates substantial efforts and practical steps towards strengthening Africa-Europe relation, resources to border security have been more in focus than its engagement with Africa which often lacks a **long-term vision** centered on resilience-building and economic collaboration. In contrast, nations such as China and Gulf states are expanding their influence through significant infrastructure investments and trade partnerships across the continent³. To maintain strategic relevance, Europe must recalibrate its approach.

The Imperative of Recalibrating EU-Africa Relations: In the wake of the **2025 Munich Security Conference**, a series of pivotal events have underscored the necessity for Europe to reassess its relationship with Africa.

https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/press-releases/unccd-highlights-ecosystem-restoration-msc2025?utm

²https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-urgency-and-benefits-of-climate-adaptation-for-africas-agriculture-and-food-security/?utm

³https://ettg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ETTG-Report_Europe-%E2%80%93-Africa-relations-in-a-multi-crises-world.pdf?utm



1. Transatlantic Tensions and their Impact on EU-Africa Climate-Security Policies



The evolving dynamics between the United States and the European Union have significant bearings on Europe's external engagements, including its relations with Africa. Vice President JD Vance's address at the Munich Security Conference underscored a growing rift⁴. Such critiques, coupled with policy shifts like the U.S. withdrawal from global climate finance initiatives⁵, should compelled the EU to reassess its strategic autonomy. This reassessment influences the EU's approach to Africa in several ways:

a. Increased Defense Spending; In response to perceived unreliability of traditional alliances, the EU has committed to bolstering its defense capabilities. At a recent Brussels summit, leaders agreed to a significant increase in defense spending, aiming for greater European sovereignty in defense matters⁶. While this move enhances Europe's self-reliance, it may divert resources from development, aid and climate initiatives especially in Africa and other least developed countries, potentially hindering collaborative efforts to address climate-security challenges.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_JD_Vance_speech_at_the_Munich_Security_Conference?utm

⁵ https://www.ft.com/content/e8b7f9cf-063b-45bc-a861-6d46047738d7?utm

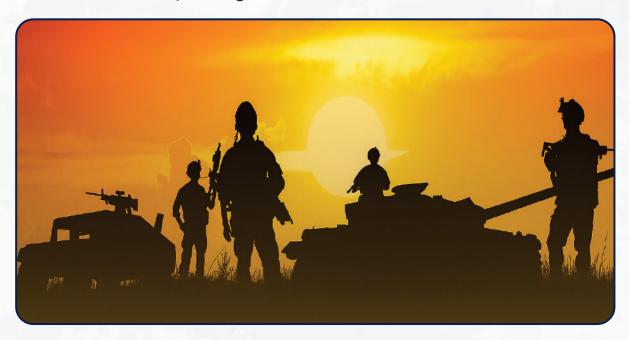
⁶ https://www.ft.com/content/478e6524-2e62-40c4-8cc6-0c56aleef3e3



- b. **Strategic Autonomy in Climate Initiatives:** The U.S. decision to exit the \$45 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), a global climate finance initiative⁷, places additional pressure on the EU to fill the leadership void in global climate action. This scenario presents both challenges and opportunities:
 - i. **Challenges:** The EU must mobilize additional resources to support least developed nations in their energy transitions, which could strain budgets and require reallocation of funds from other programs.
 - ii. **Opportunities:** By stepping up, the EU can strengthen its partnership with Africa as a continent, fostering goodwill and positioning itself as a global leader in sustainable development.

Re-evaluation of Migration and Security Policies: Vance's emphasis on internal threats, particularly mass immigration, may prompt the EU to tighten its migration policies. Such measures could affect African migrants and influence the EU's collaboration with African nations on migration management, potentially impacting joint efforts to address the root causes of migration, including climate-induced displacement.

2. Global Security Challenges



The global security landscape is increasingly defined by escalating tensions and conflicts that are reshaping geopolitical dynamics. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has significantly destabilized Eastern Europe, forcing the European Union to strengthen its defense posture while reassessing its energy dependencies. As Europe⁸ seeks alternative energy sources, the conflict has underscored the vulnerabilities in its supply chains and the urgent need for strategic diversification.

⁷ https://www.ft.com/content/e8b7f9cf-063b-45bc-a861-6d46047738d7

⁸https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/paris-summit-watch-live-ukraine-war-latest-news-6mdcnj7gm?utm_source=chat gpt.com



Simultaneously, China's growing influence, particularly through large-scale infrastructure investments in Africa, is redefining global power structures. By expanding its economic and political reach, Beijing is challenging traditional Western alliances and reshaping trade and diplomatic engagements⁹.

At the same time, border instability continues to pose a major challenge, as conflicts and economic disparities drive irregular migration and heighten security concerns. The EU faces increasing pressure to develop policies that go beyond border control, addressing the root causes of displacement and fostering sustainable solutions for regional stability.

3. Africa's Growing Significance

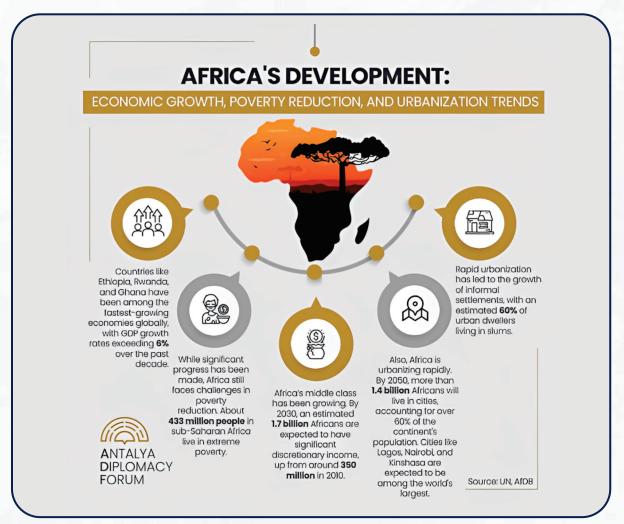


Image Source: ANTALYA Diplomacy Forum

Africa's role on the global stage is becoming increasingly pivotal, particularly in energy transition, security partnerships, and economic stability. With its vast renewable energy potential, the continent is central to global efforts in achieving sustainable energy solutions.

 $^{^9}$ https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/01/how-the-us-can-better-support-africas-energy-transition?utm_source=chatgpt.com



Investments in Africa's green energy sector are not only critical for regional electrification and economic development but also for ensuring global energy security amid shifting geopolitical landscapes¹⁰.

Beyond energy, Africa's strategic importance extends to security partnerships. The continent plays a crucial role in addressing transnational threats such as terrorism¹¹, organized crime, and illicit financial¹² flows. Stronger collaborations between Africa and global partners, including the European Union, are essential to ensuring regional stability and preventing security vacuums that could have far-reaching consequences.

Economically, Africa's emerging markets present significant opportunities for trade and investment. With one of the fastest-growing populations and a rising middle class, the continent is positioned to drive global economic growth and diversification. Strengthening trade and investment ties with Africa is not only beneficial for the continent but also for Europe's economic resilience in an era of increasing competition¹³.

In light of these developments, it is imperative for the European Union to recalibrate its policies and engagement strategies with Africa. A redefined partnership that prioritizes climate resilience, security cooperation, and economic integration will be essential in addressing mutual challenges and harnessing shared opportunities.

- i. At the **Munich Security Conference**, U.S. Vice President **JD Vance's speech** highlighted **European security vulnerabilities**, emphasizing internal governance failures.
- Ii. The EU's current policies focus on **border control** and **short-term crisis response** rather than addressing **root causes** of instability in Africa.
- lii. Climate change is amplifying conflicts across Africa, with the Sahel, Nigeria, and the Horn of Africa witnessing displacement, resource conflicts, and rising extremism.
- iv. Africa's demographic growth and economic potential present **opportunities for partnership**, not just security concerns.

¹⁰https://www.iea.org/news/increasing-energy-investment-in-africa-is-vital-for-the-continents-sustainable-economic-growth?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹¹ https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/why-africa-matters-to-us-national-security/

¹²chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2018/02/illicit-financial-flows_glg679f5/9789264268418-en.pdf

¹³ https://unctad.org/publication/economic-development-africa-report-2024



4. Key Challenges

a. The Climate-Security Nexus: Urgency for a Strategic EU-Africa Partnership

Displacement and Food Insecurity: In 2023, **7.5 million people**¹⁴ in West Africa were internally displaced due to climate-related shocks and conflict, a number expected to rise as extreme weather events intensify. The **Sahel region** is particularly vulnerable, with over **90% of agriculture being rain-fed**, leaving livelihoods at the mercy of climate variability. Prolonged droughts have already slashed agricultural output, increasing the risk of famine ¹⁵.

Ineffective Migration Policies: While EU initiatives such as the Global Gateway and the Joint EU-Africa Strategy have sought to enhance cooperation, the emphasis on border control and security partnerships has overshadowed investments in resilience-building, economic integration, and climate adaptation.

A comparative analysis highlights this imbalance: Border Control Spending vs. Climate Resilience Funding:

Between 2015 and 2022, the EU allocated over \in 12 billion to border security and migration control (European Court of Auditors, 2023)¹⁶, with a significant portion funding Frontex and migration deterrence efforts in North Africa. In contrast, EU climate adaptation funding for Africa remains below \in 4 billion annually¹⁷, despite Africa contributing less than 4% of global carbon emissions but suffering disproportionately from climate change impacts.

b. The EU Global Gateway Initiative—A Missed Opportunity?

Launched in 2021, the Global Gateway initiative pledged €150 billion in investments across Africa, positioning itself as a strategic alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, implementation has been slow and largely focused on hard infrastructure (roads, ports, energy projects) with limited investments in climate adaptation, local economic development, and food security—sectors crucial for long-term resilience (EIB, 2023)¹8.

C. The EU-Africa Summit Commitments—Gap Between Promises and Action

At the 2022 EU-Africa Summit, European leaders promised to build stronger trade partnerships and support Africa's green transition. Yet, only 10% of pledged funds have been disbursed, while restrictive EU trade policies—such as agricultural subsidies that disadvantage African farmers—remain unchanged¹⁹.

 $https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2025-I\,12-global-gateway-partnership-between-ebid-and-eib-to-promote-climate-action-and-environmental-sustainability-projects-in-the-ecowas-region$

¹⁴ https://www.internal-displacement.org/regional-reports/internal-displacement-in-africa/

¹⁵https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/global-report-on-food-crises---acute-hunger-remains-persistently-high-in-59-countries-with-l-in-5-people-assessed-in-need-of-critical-urgent-action/en

¹⁶ https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/AR-2023-AIB/AR-2023-AIB EN.pdf?utm

¹⁷ https://www.eif.org/news_centre/publications/eib_group_sustainability_report_2023_en.pdf?utm ¹⁸

¹⁹ https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/eu-africa-summit-new-words-same-game/2505004



5. Diverse Case Studies Illustrating Challenges

A comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges at the intersection of climate change, migration, and security in Africa, a preview diverse case studies, building upon the existing examples and exploring the situations in the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa, emphasizing how climate change drives migration and instability, thereby impacting EU security and policy considerations.

i. The Sahel Region—Climate Change, Migration Routes, and Mediterranean Crossings:

The Sahel region, characterized by semi-arid landscapes, has been profoundly affected by climate change, leading to increased desertification, erratic rainfall, and diminished agricultural productivity. These environmental stressors have exacerbated food insecurity and poverty, compelling many inhabitants to migrate in search of better livelihoods.

ii. Migration Dynamics

Internal Displacement: Climate-induced crop failures and livestock losses have resulted in significant internal displacement within Sahelian countries. **Transnational Migration**, a cause of many migrants traversing perilous routes through countries like Niger and Chad, aiming to reach North Africa, particularly Libya, as a gateway to Europe.

iii. Libya as a Transit Hub:

Libya's strategic location and porous borders owed to prolonged government and institutional instability have made it a central transit point for migrants from the Sahel aiming to cross the Mediterranean. The country's political instability and limited capacity to manage migration flows have led to humanitarian crises, including overcrowded detention centers and human rights abuses.

iv. Mediterranean Crossings and EU Security Concerns:

The perilous journey across the Mediterranean has resulted in numerous tragedies. In 2024, Greece faced a significant surge in unaccompanied refugee minors arriving via a new trafficking route from Libya to Crete, leading to what has been described as a "children's emergency." Over 13,000 minors arrived by sea, including exceptionally young children from Syria and Egypt. This spike in migration is attributed to geopolitical unrest and the climate crisis in the region²⁰.

v . The Horn of Africa—Somalia's Drought-Driven Instability and EU Naval Security Concerns

Somalia, in the Horn of Africa, has been severely impacted by recurrent droughts attributed to climate change. These environmental challenges have compounded existing socio-political issues, leading to instability that poses concerns for regional and international security, including that of the European Union.



Vi. Drought and Humanitarian Crisis:

In 2022, the Horn of Africa experienced its driest conditions in over four decades, resulting in the deaths of 43,000 people²¹. As of March 2025, approximately 3.4 million people in Somalia are facing acute food insecurity, with projections indicating that this number could rise to 4.4 million²² due to anticipated below-average rainfall between April and June 2025. Children are particularly affected, with 1.7 million under the age of five at risk of acute malnutrition by December 2025. The humanitarian crisis has exacerbated internal displacement and fueled the activities of militant groups exploiting the vulnerable population, leading to increased instability.

Vii. EU Naval Security Concerns:

The instability in Somalia has had direct implications for maritime security in the region. The EU has been actively involved in naval operations to combat piracy and secure vital shipping lanes off the Somali coast. The ongoing instability necessitates sustained EU engagement to ensure the safety of maritime routes critical for international trade.

6. Reforming EU Migration Policy: Alternatives Beyond Border Security

a. Shifting Border Enforcement to Legal Pathways

From 2015 to 2022, the EU allocated over €12 billion to border security and migration control, significantly outpacing investments in economic partnerships and legal migration programs. Frontex, the EU border agency, has seen its budget increase nearly sixfold, from €142 million in 2015 to €900 million in 2022²³. At the same time, funding for labor migration and skills partnerships remains marginal. The EU Talent Partnerships, introduced in 2021 to facilitate legal migration from Africa, remain underfunded and underutilized, with little expansion beyond pilot projects²⁴.

b. Economic Partnerships Enabling Labor Migration

Rather than relying on border enforcement and repatriation agreements, the EU should strengthen **economic partnerships that create legal migration opportunities**, particularly in sectors facing labor shortages.

c. Germany-Ghana Migration Partnership: A Successful Model

One of the most successful programs in legal migration cooperation is the Germany-Ghana Skills Partnership, which facilitates structured labor mobility while also enhancing Ghana's domestic employment opportunities²⁵.

https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/extra-I-million-people-could-be-engulfed-somalia-hunger-crisis-wfp-says-2025 -03-04/?utm

²²

²³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/memo_18_4127

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/talent-partnerships_en

²⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/5249_en



- I. The program provides **vocational training and work placements** in sectors like construction, healthcare, and IT, ensuring that migrants can contribute effectively to the German economy.
- II. Ghanaian workers receive **temporary, renewable work permits,** allowing them to gain international experience while maintaining ties with their home country.
- III. The initiative is **co-financed by the German government and private sector**, ensuring sustainability and minimizing the risk of exploitative labor conditions (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2024).

Expanding similar agreements across other EU member states could provide structured, legal migration pathways, reducing the reliance on irregular migration channels.

D. Investing in Africa's Local Economies to Curb Forced Migration

A core driver of irregular migration is the **lack of economic opportunities in origin countries**. Rather than focusing solely on deterring migration, the EU should:

I. Expand EU-Africa trade agreements

to create jobs in Africa. Current EU agricultural subsidies undercut African farmers, making African exports less competitive in European markets²⁶. Reforming these policies could stimulate local industries and reduce forced migration. Increase funding for youth employment initiatives in Africa. While the EU's Jobs and Growth Compact for Africa has pledged to support employment, only a fraction of the funds have been disbursed. A scaled-up, results-oriented investment could provide young Africans with viable economic alternatives to migration.

II. Expanding Circular and Seasonal Work Migration

The EU should also expand **circular and seasonal migration schemes**, which allow workers to travel legally, work for a designated period, and return home with improved skills and income.

²⁶_https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/africa_en



Case Study: Spain's Seasonal Worker Scheme for Moroccan Agricultural Workers

- Spain has successfully implemented a seasonal worker program for Moroccan agricultural workers, offering them short-term contracts in Spain's fruit and vegetable farms.
- The program ensures fair wages, housing provisions, and return incentives, reducing the reliance on irregular migrationSpain has successfully implemented a seasonal worker program for Moroccan agricultural workers, offering them short-term contracts in Spain's fruit and vegetable farms.
- The program ensures **fair wages, housing provisions, and return incentives**, reducing the reliance on irregular migration (International Organization for Migration, 2024).
- Expanding such programs across EU member states could match labor demand with supply, particularly in sectors facing worker shortages.²⁷.
- Expanding such programs across EU member states could **match labor demand with supply**, particularly in sectors facing worker shortages.

²⁷



Policy Recommendations

1. Shift Investments Towards Climate Resilience

- v. Increase climate adaptation funding for Africa to at least €10 billion annually by 2027, prioritizing water security, food systems, and desertification control.
- vi. **Expand the Global Gateway initiative** beyond infrastructure to include climate-smart agriculture, reforestation, and early-warning systems.
- vii. Invest in early warning systems for climate-related conflicts

2. Reform Migration Policies for Stability

- i. Shift at least 30% of migration-related funding towards job creation, skills development, and labor mobility schemes by 2030.
- ii. Expand **legal migration pathways** including work-study programs and labor agreements, **work-study visa programs** and **circular migration schemes** to reduce dangerous irregular migration.
- iii. Prioritize Localized, Sustainable Migration Solutions
- iv. **Regional Cooperation**, Collaborate with African nations to improve border management and protect the rights of migrants.

3. Strengthen Security Cooperation Beyond Military Assistance

- Support ECOWAS and AU-led peacekeeping with intelligence sharing and conflict prevention funding.
- Build joint EU-African climate security task forces.
 - **Resource Allocation**: Increase funding for climate adaptation projects in vulnerable regions to address root causes of migration and instability.
- Capacity Building: Support local governance structures to enhance resilience against climate-induced shocks and reduce susceptibility to extremist exploitation.

4. Redefine Trade and Economic Partnerships

- i. Remove or **reduce EU agricultural subsidies** that distort African markets, fostering **fair trade partnerships** instead.
- ii. Move beyond extractive industries—support **Africa's green economy development**.



- iii. Strengthen EU-Africa partnerships in clean energy and technology transfer.
- iv. Support **Africa's local industries and value chains** rather than continuing to focus on raw material extraction.

Key Implementation Steps for the EU and Member States

- 1. Legislative & Budget Reforms (2025-2027)
 - Amend EU budget priorities to increase climate adaptation funding within the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).
 - Reform trade agreements to eliminate market-distorting agricultural subsidies.
- 2. Bilateral and Regional Agreements (2025-2027)
 - Expand **EU-Africa Talent Partnerships** in **key industries** (e.g., digital economy, health, agriculture).
 - Finalize fair trade agreements that encourage African value-added exports.
- 3. Implementation and Scaling (2026-2030)
 - Monitor and evaluate progress on climate adaptation and energy investments.
 - Gradually shift migration funding from border control to economic development programs.

Strengthening EU-Africa Policy: A Clear Roadmap for Action

The EU's engagement with Africa requires a **shift from reactive crisis management to a strategic, long-term approach** focused on resilience, economic cooperation, and climate adaptation. Current policies allocate **disproportionate resources to border security**, while funding for sustainable development remains inadequate. To achieve a **balanced and effective policy**, the EU must adopt a **time-bound**, **structured implementation plan** that prioritizes key areas for reform.

A Policy Roadmap for Sustainable EU-Africa Relations (2025–2030) "a time-bound, structured implementation plan that prioritizes key areas for reform"



Policy Objective	Current Challenge	Action Plan	Implementation Timeline
Reallocate EU Development Funds Toward Climate Adaptation	Only €4 billion/year is allocated to Africa's climate adaptation, while €12 billion has been spent on border security and migration control since 2015 ²⁸	- Increase climate adaptation funding to at least €10 billion/year by 2027 Prioritize water security, sustainable agriculture, and disaster preparedness.	2025-2028
Expand EU Talent Partnerships for Legal Migration	EU labor shortages remain unaddressed, while only pilot projects exist for legal migration ²⁹ .	- Expand Germany-Ghana-style migration partnerships across 10 African countries by 2026 Allocate €500 million in funding to train African workers in healthcare, tech, and engineering.	2024-2026
Reform EU-Africa Trade Agreements	EU agricultural subsidies make African exports uncompetitive, forcing reliance on raw material extraction ³⁰ .	- Reduce agricultural subsidies that distort African markets by 2025 Implement fair trade agreements that prioritize value-added African exports by 2026.	2025-2026
Shift at Least 30% of Migration Funding Toward Economic Development	The majority of migration funds are spent on border control rather than job creation in Africa ³¹ .	- Reallocate €3 billion from border security to youth employment programs by 2027. - Scale up circular migration and work-study visa programs.	2025-2027
Scale Up Renewable Energy Investments via the Global Gateway Initiative	The Global Gateway focuses primarily on hard infrastructure, with limited investment in climate-smart energy and adaptation ³² .	 Invest €30 billion in renewable energy projects in Africa by 2030. Support off-grid solar and mini-grid solutions in rural areas. 	2025-2030

²⁸ https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/eu-trust-fund-for-africa

https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-resettlement-and-integration/talent-partnerships_en



Conclusion

A Pivotal Moment for EU-Africa Strategic Realignment

The evolving global landscape demands a paradigm shift in EU-Africa relations—one that moves beyond reactive policies toward a proactive, strategic partnership. A crisis-driven approach will only heighten vulnerabilities on both continents, exacerbating instability, migration pressures, and security risks.

Africa is not merely a security concern for Europe; it is a vital partner in shaping a resilient, sustainable future. Investing in Africa's stability—through climate adaptation, economic cooperation, and governance support—is an investment in Europe's own long-term security and prosperity. Now is the time for a bold and forward-thinking realignment that fosters shared growth, resilience, and peace.

"Investing in Africa's stability today means securing Europe's future peace and prosperity".

³¹ https://thecorrespondent.com/150/a-breakdown-of-europes-eur1-5bn-migration-spending-in-nigeria

 $^{^{32}\} https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/global-gateway-projects_en$