

January 2023

The Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue: Mission Statement

Abstract/Key messages

The Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue is a platform of African and European mayors working together to deliver innovative and practical solutions for inclusive growth and sustainable urban development in and between their cities. The collaboration focuses on areas of common interest such as the urban green and blue economy; the creative sectors, culture and the arts; sustainable urban financing; and human mobility. The Dialogue aspires to a new and more equal model of cooperation between Africa and Europe, focusing on the needs and potential of all urban residents and their contribution to economies and societies.

Participating cities currently include Milan, Freetown, Accra, Agadez, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bristol, Dakar, Durban, Entebbe, Helsinki, Kampala, Kanifing, Kigali, Lisbon, Mannheim, Maputo, Paris, Tunis and Zürich.



Our vision

The Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue is a platform of African and European mayors working together to deliver innovative and practical solutions for inclusive growth and sustainable urban development in and between their cities.

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The Dialogue aspires to a new and more equal model of cooperation between Africa and Europe, focusing on the needs and potential of all urban residents and their contribution to economies and societies.

As a city led initiative the Dialogue offers practical approaches for cities and their residents to seize the opportunities of human mobility, develop new skills, fill labour market gaps and thus contribute to inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Our work is rooted in international commitments, including the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Global Compact on Migration.

What we do

Mayors across Africa and Europe are working together in a partnership of equals to develop, test and scale innovative solutions for sustainable urban futures. They are creating concrete, city led initiatives and meaningful partnerships: for example, the cities of Freetown and Milan are partnering to develop skills and investment opportunities in their fashion and textiles industries; Freetown and Kampala are sharing learning and best-practice on the design and realisation of urban greening models; and Freetown, Kanifing and Monrovia are sharing knowledge on waste management systems. Other cities are exploring innovative financing to support better delivery of services to all residents.

Grounded in the practical needs of their residents, these mayors offer fresh perspectives and approaches that can inspire policy and practice within and across countries and regions.

Why it matters

Cities matter: by 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities. While not all cities grow at the same pace across Africa and Europe, they share similar opportunities and challenges relating to modern urban living, which city leaders are uniquely placed to address.

The last few years have shown that we need new ways of forging global cooperation to find common solutions to shared challenges. As the world moves from emergency response to recovery, the COVID 19 pandemic continues to impact lives and economies. Looking ahead, a long-awaited AU-EU Summit in 2022 offers an opportunity to kickstart a new chapter for relations between the two continents.

Cities are uniquely positioned to reinvigorate the Africa–Europe partnership. City leaders are quickly informed about and responsive to their residents' needs. Mayors can thus share insights with other levels of government (national and trans-regional) on how to bridge gaps between diverse communities and societies, with a focus on good practices and innovative approaches.

To make progress on global goals, decision makers must listen to, work with and support cities. Pragmatic alliances between cities in Africa and Europe can advance global cooperation and inform national and regional policies, on migration and beyond.

Our mission and goals

By reinforcing the voice and agency of cities on the international stage, the Mayors' Dialogue aims to create opportunities and improve the lives of all urban residents, helping to redress the power imbalances that persist between the two continents.

By 2030, our end goal is for cities to have made a significant impact on the implementation of all the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To achieve this, we work on the following goals and concrete objectives:

Political and policy goals	Operational and partnership goals
<p>We create opportunities for city-led political dialogue to reinvigorate the Africa-Europe partnership, with the goal of institutionalizing mayoral representation in regional and intercontinental processes.</p>	<p>We foster innovative city-led models for integrating human mobility in sustainable urban development that can be scaled.</p>
<p>We work towards pragmatic human mobility options in and between the continents through city-led approaches informed by local realities.</p>	<p>We develop concrete partnerships between African and European cities, creating a space for cities to elevate promising initiatives and share good practices.</p>
<p>We focus on the opportunities that human mobility can create such as jobs, the transition to a green economy and sustainable urban development.</p>	<p>These partnerships demonstrate the need for a broader approach to human mobility in and between the two continents, shaped by local innovation.</p>
<p>By 2022, our aim is for cities to have a seat at the table at the EU-AU summit and other inter-regional policy processes.</p>	<p>By 2022, our aim is for public and private actors to invest in practical experiments that test innovations between and within cities, so that those which are successful can be brought to scale.</p>
<p>Looking ahead, our aim is for the international system to reinforce the voice and agency of cities, by institutionalising mayoral representation in regional processes.</p>	<p>Looking ahead, our aim is to have secured sustainable public funding as well as innovative private financing to support city-led initiatives and collaborations.</p>

Key facts: cities and partners

Participating cities currently include Milan, Freetown, Accra, Agadez, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bristol, Dakar, Durban, Entebbe, Helsinki, Kampala, Kanifing, Kigali, Lisbon, Mannheim, Maputo, Paris, Tunis and Zürich.

The Mayors' Dialogue was established in early 2020, on the initiative of Mayor Aki-Sawyerr (Freetown) and Mayor Sala (Milan).

The number of participating cities is not static but may evolve and expand according to cities' needs and priorities.

The Dialogue is supported by a core group of partners: ODI, the Mayors Migration Council (MMC), Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the IKEA Foundation.

- ODI acts as the operational and strategic hub for the Mayors' Dialogue, leading on political and policy engagement, partnership development, research and coordination.
- The MMC provides expert advice and strategic direction in the design and development of the Dialogue.
- The Dialogue is financially supported by Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the IKEA Foundation. They provide strategic direction to the Dialogue and help establish connections with key stakeholders in the space, as well as potential new funders.
- The Dialogue advises, influences and collaborates with key city networks, regional bodies, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.