

Enhancing EU-Africa Cooperation in Renewable Energy under the European Green Deal

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Executive Summary

The European Green Deal (EGD) presents a transformative framework for sustainable energy transitions, offering a unique opportunity for enhanced collaboration between the European Union (EU) and Africa. This partnership is essential in addressing global energy challenges, particularly in light of shifting geopolitical landscapes and the urgent need for energy security. Africa's vast renewable energy potential and Europe's technological expertise create a mutually beneficial pathway for accelerating green transitions. However, key challenges including political instability, infrastructure deficits, and regulatory barriers must be addressed to unlock the full potential of EU-Africa energy cooperation.

Context and Importance of the Issue

The European Green Deal (EGD) is the EU's flagship policy framework aimed at achieving climate neutrality by 2050. A central pillar of this agenda is securing sustainable energy partnerships, particularly with Africa, which holds vast untapped renewable energy resources. The need for strengthened EU-Africa cooperation has intensified due to geopolitical disruptions, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, which has heightened Europe's energy security concerns and increased its focus on diversifying energy supply chains. Africa's Agenda 2063, a strategic vision for the continent's development aligns closely with the EGD's objectives. By fostering co-creation and co-ownership of renewable energy technologies, both regions can advance their sustainable development goals.

Opportunities for EU-Africa Energy Cooperation

- 1. Renewable Energy Co-creation and Investment:** Africa possesses vast untapped potential in solar, wind, green hydrogen and hydropower, by co-investment in renewable energy infrastructure, the EU and Africa can benefit from increased energy security, job creation, and sustainable economic growth.
- 2. Energy Infrastructure Development:** expanding Africa's renewable energy sector requires substantial improvements in grid systems and modernized infrastructure to ensure efficient integration of renewable energy sources into national and regional markets. Strengthening energy infrastructure through international cooperation will be key to unlocking Africa's full renewable energy potential and supporting long-term economic development.
- 3. Job Creation and Capacity Building:** investing in renewable energy industries presents a significant opportunity to create employment in Africa while addressing energy poverty. As the continent shifts toward a greener economy, there is a growing need for a skilled workforce to support the development, installation, and maintenance of renewable energy systems.
- 4. Energy Democracy and Just Transition:** ensuring a just and inclusive energy transition requires the promotion of fair governance frameworks that empower local communities in decision-making processes related to renewable energy development. Implementing policies that guarantee social inclusion and economic viability will be

essential in securing public support and long-term sustainability. A fair transition should prioritize social inclusion and economic viability to secure public support and long-term sustainability.

Challenges and Barriers

1. **Political and Geopolitical Uncertainties:** the rise of far-right politics in the EU threatens the continuity of green policies, potentially leading to shifts in funding priorities and reduced support for sustainability initiatives. Meanwhile, Africa's political instability and inconsistent regulatory environments create uncertainty for long-term energy investments, discouraging private-sector participation and slowing the implementation of large-scale renewable energy projects.
2. **Infrastructure and Financing Gaps:** the expansion of renewable energy projects in Africa is significantly hindered by limited access to green finance and high capital costs, making it difficult for businesses and governments to scale up sustainable energy solutions. Many renewable energy initiatives struggle to secure long-term, affordable financing due to perceived investment risks and the absence of strong financial incentives.
3. **Trade and Regulatory Complexities:** the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) presents a major trade challenge for African exports, as it imposes additional costs on goods with high carbon footprints, potentially limiting Africa's access to European markets. This policy, if not adapted to regional circumstances, risks undermining economic partnerships and discouraging investment in Europe-Africa green transition.

Policy Recommendations for EU Stakeholders

1. **Strengthen Investment in Green Infrastructure:** the EU should strengthen investment in green infrastructure by establishing financing mechanisms that support renewable energy development. A key initiative would be the creation of an EU-Africa Green Energy Investment Fund, providing long-term financing for sustainable energy projects.
2. **Enhance Policy Alignment and Regulatory Frameworks:** the EU must develop transparent trade and investment frameworks that facilitate renewable energy development while addressing trade barriers such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). A reformed CBAM is essential to prevent Africa's green transition from being hindered by restrictive trade measures. The EU should introduce a Green Transition Support Mechanism by 2026, providing technical and financial assistance to African exporters affected by CBAM.
3. **Foster Inclusive and Resilient Energy Transitions:** the EU should establish a Green Workforce Development Initiative to train skilled workers by 2030 in solar, wind, and bioenergy technology, focusing on installation, maintenance, and project management. This can be achieved by integrating renewable energy certification programs into vocational training institutions and universities, while also providing funded apprenticeships and scholarships for young professionals.

4. **Boost Research, Innovation, and Technology Transfer:** the EU should support the creation of EU-Africa Renewable Energy Innovation Hubs, with at least five research centers across Africa by 2028, focusing on green hydrogen, energy storage, waste-to-energy, and decentralized solar solutions. Providing research grants for joint EU-African projects will enhance technological co-creation and ensure Africa benefits from cutting-edge advancements.
5. **Expand Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** the EU and African governments should establish a Sustainable Energy PPP Accelerator, aiming to attract private investments by 2030. This initiative should introduce tax incentives and risk guarantees to encourage EU-African joint ventures in renewable energy while also creating a Green Business Matching Platform to connect European investors with African energy entrepreneurs.

Policy Recommendations for African Stakeholders

1. **Multidisciplinary Negotiators:** The AU must form and strengthen a multidisciplinary team of pan-African negotiators who are inspired and motivated by Africa's growth. This multidisciplinary negotiating team should be able to negotiate reasonable and beneficial arrangements for Africa while also ensuring that the EGD meets its key aims for Africa as promised.
2. **Unified African Financial Facility:** To fuel the AU Agenda 2063, which corresponds with the EGD on renewable energy transitions, African states must establish a shared unified financial facility using revenues from national governments. Africa must lead its renewable energy revolution contextually and acceptably using African financing.
3. **African Monitoring and Verification Systems:** with critical lessons from previous EU-Africa initiatives, the AU must build a monitoring, reporting, and verification system (MRV) to oversee future renewable energy projects under the EGD. The MRV will track progress in project design, implementation, and outcomes. The MRV will have strict checks and balances to hold African stakeholders accountable for bribery, corruption, and mismanagement of resources.
4. **Continue to pursue Reparations:** The AU should continue to seek reparations from EU countries that have endangered and continue to threaten African lives and environments. Under the EU-Africa collaboration on the EGD for renewable energy transitions, the AU must be aggressive in its request for EU assistance to eliminate energy poverty and promote fair development in Africa.

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