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1. The maximum length of articles, including endnotes, is 4500 words.

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3. The author's name, institutional affiliation, and full contact details (postal, phone, fax, and email) should be provided on a separate sheet.

4. Endnotes should be avoided, or kept to a minimum. Authors should pay particular attention to the accuracy and correct presentation of endnotes. Examples:
Books and monographs: Maria Raquel Freire, *Conflict and Security in the Former Soviet Union: The Role of the Osce* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 45.
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Chapters in books: Manuel Ennes Ferreira, "China in Angola: Just a Passion for Oil?", in Christopher Alden, Daniel Large and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira (eds.), *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and a Continent Embrace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 295-317.
Articles in journals: Paulo Gorjão, "Japan's Foreign Policy and East Timor, 1975–2002" (*Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September/October 2002), pp. 754-771.
Articles in newspapers: Paulo Gorjão, "UN needs coherent strategy to exit from East Timor" (*Jakarta Post*, 19 May 2004), p. 25.

5. Diagrams and tables should be avoided, or kept to a minimum.

West Africa and the European Union: key areas and possible response measures

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Introduction: African growth and social development in the last decade

From 1990 to 1999, the GDP per capita in sub-Saharan Africa grew 15%, coming from an average of US$1.158 billion to US$1.327 billion. In the following decade, from 2000 to 2008, that average growth increased by 54%, from an average of US$1.372 billion up to US$2.113 billion.

In only a year, between 2007 and 2008, exports from sub-Saharan countries grew 29.7%, from US$319 billion up to US$413 billion. Imports grew 21.8% in the same period of time, from US$305 billion up to US$372 billion.

With these figures available, it is easy to understand that in the last decade, in some sub-Saharan countries with more developed welfare policies, the number of people that form the "middle class" has started to grow significantly. This element of the emerging new class of consumers deserved special attention in the 2010 "*World Press Photo*" awards, since one of the awarded photos was taken in the Mozambican capital and focused precisely on these new sub-Saharan middle class consumers.

Africa has also had a significant increase in the number of countries where democracy and the rule of law were reinforced in the last decade. Nowadays there are fewer coups in Africa than two decades ago and, in its overwhelming majority, changes in government tend to be done within the constitutional framework of each country.

The African Union and the several African Regional Economic Communities (such as, among others, ECOWAS and SADC) have played an absolutely crucial role in pushing for this very positive legal and democratic evolution. Democracy and the rule of law are becoming solid values of these organizations, which have promoted them among their member states, thus showing a strong sense of ownership of these values, and no longer considering them as concepts imposed or suggested from outside.

As it happened in Europe, this is not the only way but it is certainly one of the most adequate strategies to promote democracy, the rule of law and stability in Africa, to encourage its development and social progress. Consequently, and aside from its bilateral policies with each African nation, Europe should also support – both politically and financially – the

African Regional Economic Communities, helping them to build regional integration and thus contributing to the stability of the whole continent. Regional integration is, once again, a model of development and the most efficient way of conflict prevention.

Whether we like it or not, it is a fact that we are living in times of globalization, on a scale never before seen. Economic growth in Africa positively affects other regions of the world – namely Europe – where Africans tend to buy significant parts of their imports. While building a stable Africa with more job creation is first and foremost an African objective, Europeans shouldn't be indifferent to this project: not only because they feel a certain moral obligation to help others in need, but also because it is in their own interest to contribute to the stability and social development of their closest neighbors. If the economic growth of one region has an impact on global economy, the same happens with organized crime, human and drug trafficking, terrorism and piracy. These problems, based in one part of the world, must be faced and fought as international questions and not as mere regional problems, since they have consequences that go far beyond the region where they primarily act.

The specific situation of West Africa: regional or global problem?

If economic growth and democracy are gaining solid ground in the African continent, some nations and some regions are being affected differently by these positive evolutions. In West Africa, for example, stability and security have been deteriorating over the last decade, namely through the weakening of democratic institutions and the increase of organized crime with drug trafficking, illegal immigration and terrorism. The combination of these factors represents, first of all, a major threat to all the countries in the region, but it can't be considered just as a regional or sub-regional problem. In fact it is an international concern since it represents a threat that goes far beyond West Africa. Indeed, in various respects, Europe is directly related to this growing instability, since it is the main market for the drugs and illegal immigration passing through West Africa and also one of the main targets for the terrorist groups based in there.

Although the domestic situation of these West African countries varies considerably from state to state, the large majority of them face several intersecting threats, which over the years have produced a vicious circle of insecurity and instability. External sources of those threats – mainly organized crime and international terrorism – function with a regional perspective, not within the framework of national borders.

The role of the EU in the common problems of the West African countries

In response to the challenges mentioned above, the European Union has advantages in developing a regional strategy, with measures that have a regional reach rather than a

country-by-country approach. Apart from national governments, all regional strategies should be developed in close partnership not only with ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations, but also with the United States and several Latin American countries.

There are four key areas on which one should focus as a matter of priority and establish a list of possible actions in each of those areas.

Institutional fragility and situations of extreme poverty

Weak institutional capacity, poor levels of respect for the rule of law and oversized armed forces are common traits for the majority of the countries in the region. It is thus not surprising that 50% of all annual coups and unconstitutional regime changes in the world take place in West Africa, with serious implications for regional and international security.

With the exception of Cape Verde, all other states in the region[1] belong to the group of Least Developed Countries and/or rank among the worst performing nations in the UNDP Human Development Index. Fast-paced demographic growth, with about 60% of the population under 25, combined with fragile economies and high unemployment rates have turned illegal activities into the only viable alternative for large sectors of society. Dire socio-economic conditions are a natural push for emigration and, consequently, for the gradual establishment of organized crime and human trafficking networks, most of them directed towards the European continent.

Possible EU actions: A stronger focus on institution-building development aid in the core state-building areas, namely in the justice sector, training and equipment of security forces and border control; an increased support must be given to the strengthening of regional and national capacities for promoting political stability and the rule of law. It is important for the EU to develop rapid response mechanisms for engaging in international initiatives aimed at isolating local sources of instability (currently in countries such as the Republic of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Ivory Coast), as individual crises very quickly contaminate other parts of the region.

Human trafficking and illegal immigration

Human trafficking is a common problem for every country in the region, especially (though not exclusively) coastal states. Taking advantage of barely-controlled borders and widespread corruption among security forces, human trafficking networks use routes in West Africa to transport large numbers of illegal immigrants to Europe.

A number of EU-sponsored initiatives have yielded some positive results: cooperation programs with Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Senegal and Mauritania; joint patrolling initiatives by EU member states, as well as FRONTEX becoming operational, have all resulted in a

decrease of illegal migration through maritime routes and represent good examples of an active EU engagement in the region.

However, the decline of maritime routes has resulted in the growing importance of land routes, especially in Mali and Niger. We have also witnessed a worrying overlap and blending of illegal immigration and drug trafficking routes, whose final destination is usually the European continent

Possible EU actions: mitigation of illegal immigration through stronger cooperation with countries of origin; allocation of development aid to improve border control capabilities; reinforcement of FRONTEX; promotion of economic development of countries of origin, particularly targeted at population groups most likely to migrate.

Drug-trafficking

For the past ten years several West African countries have functioned as a springboard for cocaine routes, coming from South America and destined for Europe. More recently, there is evidence that West Africa is also becoming a ground for the processing of cocaine and other illegal drugs.

The inclusion of West Africa in drug-trafficking routes is directly linked to the rise of corruption in the countries that are most immediately affected, and this is linked to unconstitutional regime changes throughout the region.

The following data provides examples of the extent of the phenomenon:

- 2007: 6,5 tons of cocaine seized.
- UNODC estimates that 50 tons of cocaine destined for Europe every year come via West Africa. This represents around one third of all cocaine consumed in Europe.
- The rise in cocaine demand in Europe may lead to an increase of up to 250 tons of West African traffic per year.
- Both the fight against drug trafficking in Mexico and the Caribbean, and the success of drug-trafficking operations in West Africa, have led it to become a transit region for drugs that are destined for North America as well.

The ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa (adopted in October 2008), as well as the "West Africa Coast Initiative" (set up in 2009 with the objective of reinforcing national and regional capacities for combating organized crime and drug-trafficking) are good examples of ongoing initiatives coming from the region. However, the rise in seizures (for example, a single seizure in Gambia uncovered a shipment of 2,3 tons of cocaine), is a strong reminder that current measures are insufficient to stop the flow of drugs from West Africa into Europe.

Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that West Africa is now becoming a region for the processing of drugs. This is a recent phenomenon holding a variety of implications for

the European Union, namely due to the important role drug production plays in financing terrorism, as the case of Afghanistan has shown in the past.

Possible EU actions: reinforcement of border controls; strengthening of cooperation between the EU and the UN (UNODC), Interpol and ECOWAS. In this context, a EU/ECOWAS joint assessment of the Regional Action Plan and the WACI could be considered as a means of strengthening those instruments; strong coordination between police and military efforts in the combat against drug-trafficking; preliminary work on the possibility of setting up international courts or other mechanisms to prosecute and try drug-trafficking related cases on a regional basis, thus relieving local judicial systems of an impossible burden; support for the revision or introduction of legislation to improve domestic capacity to deal with drug-related crimes; strengthening and training of domestic security forces.

International terrorism

Islamic terrorist organizations, notably the AQMI, have recently raised their profile in West Africa, with direct implications for the European territory. The expansion of their activities in the region has serious implications for governance and security in individual countries, limiting sovereignty and development capacities.

AQMI has taken advantage of the security vacuum – and indeed the absence of state structures – in the Sahel sub-region, specially in northwest Mali, Niger and the southern part of Algeria, to set up operational units acting in the whole Sahel-Sahara region. AQMI is currently the most serious security threat for Sahel states, as well as for European interests in the region, since the terrorist group has issued a number of terrorist attacks and threats in Europe. The kidnapping of European citizens by AQMI members and the resulting ransoms (reaching allegedly tens of millions of Euros) are an important financial resource for the organization.

Recent data (February 2008 – September 2010):

- 7 kidnapping operations (a total of 20 individuals kidnapped).
- 2 executions (E. Dyer e M. Germaneau).
- 5 assassinations of Western citizens.
- 3 suicide attacks.

Over the same period, a number of individuals linked to AQMI were arrested in Europe, over allegations of financing terrorism and planning terrorist attacks.

Possible EU actions: implementation of the EU Strategy for the Sahel region (currently being prepared); reinforcement of coordination and cooperation between intelligence agencies; reinforcement of the stability instrument mechanisms aimed at training security forces and services.

Conclusions

The political and security situation in West Africa poses a number of serious challenges for Europe. We should aim to have a regional approach and reinforce multilateral cooperation concerning all four areas, establishing linkages between these areas. More concretely, this requires:

- A more efficient and coordinated use of various EU mechanisms (EUROPOL; Stability Instrument; European Development Fund, Fontanot Group, among others);
- But also working with the United Nations (UNOWA, UNODC, among others), international financial instruments, development banks; and,
- Last but certainly not least, working with regional African institutions, especially the African Union and ECOWAS.

Finally, all of the interlinked issues mentioned here should be the subject of an EU meeting at the political level on West Africa. The initiative would be an opportunity to take stock of actions being pursued at multi- and bilateral levels, as well as for a free-ranging discussion on additional measures promoting a comprehensive security-and-development approach to the region.

* The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the position of the government of Portugal.

(Endnotes)
1 Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Republic of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

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