The future of African–European relations

From intent to practice

Date	Venue	Format	Attendance
Monday 12 Oct 2026	Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria	Full day, hybrid 09:00–16:00 SAST	In person or online Registration required

Why this conversation matters now

African–European relations are being reshaped by a more fragmented and competitive global order. Geopolitical rivalry, shifting dependencies, migration politics, energy transitions, rising demand for critical minerals and changing financial flows are altering the terms of engagement between the two regions.

For Europe, cooperation with Africa is increasingly tied to the energy transition, supply chain resilience, migration governance, market access, geopolitical considerations and the defence of a rules-based international system. At the same time, the EU proposes a partnership that goes beyond mere transactionalism and therefore needs to find the right balance or synergy between norms and interests.

For Africa, a more competitive global order creates greater room to manoeuvre, whilst demographic weight, resource endowments, and market potential increase its strategic options and agency.

How can the two regions build on their existing partnership to translate shared ambitions into inclusive, actionable and sustainable cooperation that delivers tangible benefits for both sides?

About the project

This capstone day marks the final event of this year's Future of African–European Relations project, a policy-facing inquiry into how African and European actors can cooperate under changing global power conditions.

The project is a collaboration between the African Futures & Innovation Programme at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the Federation of German Industries (BDI), the Hanns Seidel Foundation and the Megatrends Afrika consortium, comprising the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) and the Kiel Institute for the World Economy.

Bringing together researchers, policymakers, diplomatic actors, development partners, industry representatives and experts from across Africa and Europe, the full-day capstone event will explore the future of African–European cooperation.

It will focus on where interests align, where tensions remain and what practical action is required to shape effective and sustainable partnerships under changing global conditions.

MONDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2026 | ALL TIMES SAST (UTC+2)

09:00	Registration	
09:30	**Welcome and opening remarks**	**Chair: Ms Ottilia Maunganidze** Head of Special Projects, ISS **Dr Jakkie Cilliers** Chairman of the Board and Head of African Futures and Innovation (AFI), Institute for Security Studies (ISS) **Mr Hanns Bühler** Resident Representative, Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) South Africa **Mr Oliver Rentschler** German Ambassador Designate in South Africa
09:45	**Keynote address**	**Mr Ronald Lamola** Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa
10:00	Opening conversation **The future of South–North cooperation: jobs, security and opportunities** **Moderator: Ms Ottilia Maunganidze** Head of Special Projects, ISS	Introductory remarks: **Mr Ashor Sarupen** Deputy Minister of Finance, South Africa **H.E. Kristian Schmidt** EU Ambassador to South Africa **Dr Stefan Mair** Director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs and Executive Chairman of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)
11:15	Coffee break	
11:30	Panel 1 **Moving from extraction to partnership: how can Africa and Europe develop a fair critical minerals and energy future?** **Moderator: Mr Jonathan Kaupenjohann** Expert sub-Saharan Africa, Federation of German Industries (BDI)	**Dr Cobus van Staden** Managing Editor, China-Global South Project (CGSP) **Ms Sabine Dall'Omo** Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Siemens Sub-Saharan Africa, Deputy Chairwoman, Sub-Saharan Africa Initiative of German Business (SAFRI) **Mr Mzila Mthenjane** Chief Executive, Minerals Council South Africa **Mr Menzi Ndhlovu** Senior Analyst (Country Risk and Political Risk), Signal Risk
12:30	Lunch	
13:30	Panel 2 **Migration and the politics of partnership: how to balance border security with legal mobility** **Moderator: Hanns Bühler** Resident Representative, Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) South Africa	**Dr Linda Lochner** Researcher, Kiel Institute for the World Economy and Megatrends Afrika **Dr Michael Masiapato** Commissioner & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) - Border Management Authority (BMA), South Africa
14:30	Coffee break	
14:45	Panel 3 **Towards a pragmatic partnership: strategic interests, trade-offs and delivery** **Moderator: Mr Priyal Singh** Senior Research Consultant, ISS	**Dr Jakkie Cilliers** Chairman of the Board and Head of AFI, ISS **Ms Mamokete Lijane** Strategist (Global Markets) at Standard Bank, Member of the Presidential Economic Advisory Council and Chair of Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA) **Dr Benedikt Erforth** Senior Researcher and Project Lead, IDOS and Megatrends Afrika
15:45	**Closing remarks**	**Dr Benedikt Erforth** Senior Researcher and Project Lead, IDOS and Megatrends Afrika
16:00	Coffee and refreshments at the ISS venue	

Themes

Moving from extraction to partnership: how can Africa and Europe develop a fair critical minerals and energy future?

PANEL 1 · 11:30–12:30

Competition over critical minerals and energy supply chains is intensifying as governments pursue energy security, industrial competitiveness and greater geopolitical resilience. African and European actors approach cooperation with different priorities, capabilities and levels of bargaining power.

This panel will examine how engagement can move beyond extraction towards greater value addition, industrial development and more resilient supply chains, while upholding environmental and social standards. It will also explore what more strategic and mutually responsive cooperation would require from African and European governments, businesses and development institutions.

Migration and the politics of partnership: how to balance border security with legal mobility

PANEL 2 · 13:30–14:30

Migration has become one of the most contested dimensions of African–European relations, shaped by shared histories, longstanding mobility patterns and growing political pressure over border control and migration management.

This discussion will explore whether the two regions can move beyond a narrow focus on border control and repatriation toward a more balanced partnership built on legal mobility, economic opportunity, human dignity and shared responsibility. The discussion will also take into account long-term demographic trends and their implications for a more robust and sustainable approach to migration.

Towards a pragmatic partnership: strategic interests, trade-offs and delivery

PANEL 3 · 14:45–15:45

This closing panel will build on the project's thematic work and consider what more pragmatic and strategically grounded African–European cooperation would require in practice. It will explore what European and African actors need from the relationship, where their priorities align and where difficult trade-offs remain.

Rather than seeking easy consensus, the discussion will focus on what needs to change for partnership language to translate into delivery. It will consider the political, financial and institutional shifts required to build a more sustainable strategic relationship, while recognising asymmetries in power, differences in historical experience and the reality that neither Africa nor Europe speaks with one voice.