# Position Paper: United Kingdom

## Introduction

The replacement of the Cotonou Agreement after 2020 must prioritize effective development. Whilst the UK (United Kingdom) shall cease to be a member of the EU (European Union) on the 29th of March, 2019, it shall remain a major development actor alongside the EU. It is important that in the interests of effective development strategy, the mutual interests and values shared by the UK and the EU are implemented in a post-Cotonou Agreement, even if the UK is not signatory to the agreement.

The presidency has recognized that Commonwealth countries comprise a large amount of the ACP (African, Caribbean, and Pacific) states. Post-Brexit, the UK would like to work with the EU to ensure their access to EU markets in order for future economic growth in those states. 2020 provides an opportunity for looking at new ways to approach ACP relations. To enhance policy effectiveness, the UK supports a shift away from ACP level engagement to a more decentralized approach that incorporates non-ACP states and actors. The UK believes that alongside ODA (Official Development Aid), trade must also be included in a post-Cotonou Agreement. The UK recognises this as a key driver of economic growth, and the benefits that come with it. Finally, as a country at the crux of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) creation, the UK also wants to see it’s prioritized SDGs prominent in a post-Cotonou Agreement.

Post-Brexit, the UK does not intend to finance the EU and its institutions, including the EDF (European Development Fund), or the post-Cotonou Agreement. However, the UK will negotiate for the inclusion of the components outlined in this document in a post-Cotonou Agreement, in the interest of an effective development strategy for the UK, EU, and ACP states.

## Situation Relating to the United Kingdom

The UK recognises the importance of the end of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020 to the EU, as the agreement’s replacement is an opportunity for the EU and its [soon-to-be] 27 member states to reestablish their relationship with ACP countries. This reestablishment is important as it is an opportunity to bring about clarity of how the 41 Commonwealth members of the ACP will access the EU market post-Brexit. As the UK is one of only five EU member states to have met the UN target of spending 0.7 per cent of ODA (as a percentage of GNI – Gross National Income) in 2016, Brexit will pose funding challenges to the EDF. Post-Cotonou discussions are also important in this regard, as the EU must create a new framework that is non-reliant on significant financial contributions from the UK.

As stated in the ‘Future Partnership Paper’ released by Her Majesty’s government in 2017, ‘the UK shares with the EU commitments to eradicate extreme poverty and to help build prosperity, peace, stability and resilience in developing countries’. In this sense, the post-Cotonou agreement is important to the UK, as the UK wishes to see the EU uphold these commitments in the future agreement, so that the two development actors can continue to work together in areas where possible.

By 2020, when the new framework will succeed the Cotonou Agreement, the UK will cease to be a member of the EU. By default, the UK will therefore not likely be directly impacted by every decision made in post-Cotonou discussions. However, it does have a particular interest in the outcome of decisions relating to Brexit; notably, the ongoing engagement of Commonwealth members of the ACP. The UK is committed to the common principles enshrined in the SDGs. The proposal that the new framework should reinforce SDGs would have a positive impact on the UK, as the UK wishes to see further progress on the SDGs being achieved globally.

## Proposals and Solutions

### Issue 1: A Post-Cotonou Framework for EU-ACP Relations

The UK supports a shift away from the ACP level of engagement, towards a decentralized regional approach. This would consist of three ‘Regional Compacts’ that have the African, Caribbean, and Pacific groups respectively under a single framework agreement, with an opening for closer involvement of the African Union and non-ACP countries. The overarching single framework would define common values, principles, and interests which are built upon the existing agreements of the Cotonou Agreement. The advantage to taking a decentralized regional approach is that development policy can be tailored more appropriately to the issues and needs of each respective region. This thereby accommodates the geographic and economic differences between each of the regions. Migration is a significant issue in Africa, whilst issues such as sea level rise as a result of climate change are more significant in the Caribbean and Pacific regions. Whilst different policy approaches may be applied to each region, the countries still retain the advantages of collective unity as a result of the overarching single framework agreement. The African Union is a relevant player, and its inclusion in the single framework agreement would aid in regional integration. The rational for allowing the inclusion of non-ACP countries, particularly those in North Africa, is so that the EU can have a more coherent policy approach in regard to the ACP-EU partnership and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy for greater regional development. The outcome of these changes would be a more effective development strategy that targets the differing issues of each region, coupled with the inclusion of relevant actors to encourage synced regional growth, whilst retaining the advantages of a single overarching agreement.

### Issue 2: Delivering EU Development Goals

The UK considers trade to be central to effective development. Whilst ODA is vital in working towards achieving development goals, mutually beneficial trade also has potential benefits for developing countries and the UK. Trade fosters economic growth, which can lead to a decrease in unemployment, a reduction in poverty, rising incomes, and resulting greater stability. Statistics such as manufacturing workers being paid 3 to 9 times greater as a result of an open economy are a testimony to this. The UK would want to see a greater emphasis on trade for development in a post-Cotonou Agreement. The UK, in its own future development strategy, will have trade as a central component.

The UK would like to see SDGs play a greater role in the post-Cotonou Agreement. Despite possibly not being signatory to the post-Cotonou Agreement, the UK was at the forefront of negotiating the SDGs, and it will be at the forefront of ensuring that they are delivered. The UK places particular emphasis on the eradication of extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is defined as people living on less than $1.25USD a day. The UK is taking action on extreme poverty already with significant investment through the Department for International Development (DFID), which has yielded results such as 28.7 million lives saved between 2015-17 as a result of DFID funding for immunizations against killer diseases. The eradication of poverty has positive flow on effects for health, education, migration flows, and human rights. The UK also considers global peace, security and stability, as reflected in SDG 16, to be of high priority. It will continue to spend 50 per cent of the DFID budget on fragile states to combat instability, and give ODA to help build resilience, such as the £30 million given to Caribbean states to ensure hospitals stay open when disasters strike. Prioritizing peace, security, and stability (under SDG 16) in a post-Cotonou Agreement would save lives, as well as promote shared British and EU interests such as freedom, democracy, tolerance, and the rule of law, abroad. Putting poverty eradication and peace, security, and stability as SDG priorities for a post-Cotonou Agreement would contribute towards the development of the aforementioned positive consequences.

The UK is not particularly concerned with the financial structure of a post-Cotonou Agreement, so long as its interests are seen in the agreement. Whilst the UK promotes a new decentralized framework, secured access to the EU market for Commonwealth countries, and the UK’s prioritized SDGs prominent in the new agreement, it pushes for these in the interest of effective development. The UK does wish to remind the EU of its significant financial contribution to development (£13.3 billion compared with a combined total of £47.1 billion of ODA from the EU27), and that post-Brexit, the UK shall no longer pay into the EU and its institutions, including the EDF. The UK considers it up to the remaining EU-27 to come to a suitable funding arrangement for development.

## Sources

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