

# AEEP Forum 2023

## SPOTLIGHT

## Building Bridges for Green Growth

Africa-EU partnership for climate  
compatible energy access

The AEEP is supported by its Steering Group:



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## Spotlight

### Building Bridges for Green Growth – Africa-EU partnership for climate compatible energy access.

Findings from the AEEP Forum on 4 September 2023

#### SUMMARY

The **Africa-EU Energy Partnership** (AEEP) Forum 2023, was organised as a public side event at the [Africa Climate Summit](#) in Nairobi, Kenya, on 4 September 2023, and a closed-door, high-level policymaker breakfast on 5 September, in collaboration with the [Africa-Europe Foundation](#) (AEF). The discussions highlighted how Africa and EU can work in partnership to advance climate compatible energy systems and achieve SDG7 in Africa. There was a strong emphasis on the crucial role of renewable energy in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Key areas of focus included adaptable energy systems, collaboration between the public and private sectors, engaging stakeholders, and ensuring accessibility to green energy. The [Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative](#) (AEGEI), [African Single Electricity Market](#) (AfSEM) and the [Continental Power System Masterplan](#) (CPM) were mentioned as vehicles for bringing energy access to millions of Africans and reinforcing the collaborative partnership between Africa and Europe. The discussion emphasised innovative sustainable energy investment, decentralisation, and addressing regional differences, underscoring the significance of energy as a transformative service for everyone. The AEEP Forum demonstrated a steadfast dedication between Africa and Europe to encourage collaboration and innovation in the energy sector, with the aim of constructing pathways for green growth and energy access compatible with climate goals.



#### INTRODUCTION

Africa-Europe energy relations are more important than ever, not only to boost economic development in Africa, but also to ensure energy security in Europe and jointly fight climate

change. To take stock of the successful bi-continental collaboration to date and further align on shared priorities and a vision for the future, the **Africa-EU Energy Partnership** (AEEP) hosted the third annual AEEP Forum under the theme "**Building Bridges for Green Growth – Africa-EU partnership for climate-compatible energy access**" as a side event at the [Africa Climate Summit](#) in Nairobi, Kenya on 4 September, 2023. This event was a critical platform for high-level representatives from both continents to convene, share insights, and chart a visionary course for the future.

Africa's [Agenda 2063](#) and the [African Common Position on Energy Access and Just Transition](#) set the stage for how the continent is planning its energy for the short, medium, and long term. The European Union's [Global Gateway Investment Package](#) and the [Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative \(AEGEI\)](#) support these plans by increasing electricity production, giving more people access to electricity, and creating regulatory environments that make it easier for private companies to invest.



The AEEP actively supports the implementation of vital African-European initiatives, such as the [Continental Power System Masterplan](#) (CMP) and the creation of the [African Single Electricity Market](#) (AfSEM). These initiatives serve as essential building blocks for climate-compatible energy systems, but more ambitious commitments and interventions are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 while combating climate change.

The [AEEP Forum](#) provided a platform for discussions on the future of the partnership, as well as strategies to scale up renewable energy, and financing options that could simultaneously advance sustainable energy access (SDG7) and climate action (SDG13). The goal is to foster a true partnership of equals with mutual benefits.

Distinguished speakers, including **Ms Elizabeth Press**, Director of Planning and Programme Support, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), **Dr Bärbel Kofler**, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, **Dr Kamugisha Kazaura**, Director Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission (AUC) and **Ms Carla Montesi**, Director Green Deal and Digital Agenda, European Commission (EC), shared their insights on the importance of renewable energy, collaborative dialogue, and the pivotal role of this partnership in addressing the global climate crisis. They emphasised the need to shift from viewing energy as a commodity to treating it as a service, to reach a more inclusive and sustainable energy future.

## OPENING REMARKS

**Dr Kamugisha Kazaura**, Director Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission (AUC), extended a warm welcome to attendees at the AEEP Forum 2023. He underscored the historical significance of the event, transitioning from virtual to physical participation amidst the Africa Climate Summit. **Dr Kazaura** emphasised the AEEP Forum's pivotal role as a platform for dialogue, tracing its roots back to the 2007 Lisbon EU-AU Summit. He highlighted the pressing challenges faced by Africa, where nearly 600 million people lack access to modern energy services, severely limiting socio-economic opportunities. Simultaneously, he stressed the urgency of addressing climate change, a threat that demands collaborative efforts.



**Dr Kazaura** pointed to the collaborative initiatives between Africa and the EU, including the launch of the African Single Electricity Market (AfSEM) and the creation of a Continental Power Systems Masterplan (CMP). AfSEM, as a policy framework, aims to enable seamless electricity exchange among AU Member States, and will be bolstered by coordinated planning outlined in the CMP. These efforts aim to harness Africa's renewable resources efficiently, mitigating the impact of climate change. Additionally, **Dr Kazaura** highlighted the potential of the green hydrogen value chain, a strategic avenue for green industrialisation and trade with Europe.

Acknowledging the importance of ongoing dialogues, **Dr Kazaura** underscored the role of platforms like the AEEP Forum and the AEEP Energy Talks webinar series. These forums serve as crucial avenues for discussion, fostering collaboration among AU, EU and other stakeholders. **Dr Kazaura** expressed optimism that the discussions held at the AEEP Forum would lead to a deeper understanding of the challenges and facilitate greater alignment in the pursuit of climate-compatible energy access and security.

**Ms Carla Montesi**, Director Green Deal and Digital Agenda, European Commission (EC), in her opening remarks highlighted the significant strides made during the 6<sup>th</sup> EU-AU Summit in February 2022, where the Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative (AEGEI) was launched. AEGEI aims to bolster the deployment of a minimum of 50 GW of renewable electricity generation capacities, thereby providing electricity access to at least 100 million people across Africa. This initiative operates under the Team Europe approach, reinforcing the collaborative spirit between the two continents.

**“THE SOLUTION TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS TO CHART AN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT PATH WHICH IS COMPATIBLE WITH KEEPING THE GLOBAL EMISSIONS LOW”**

- **DR  
KAMUGISHA  
KAZAURA**





Emphasising the continuity of the Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP) and its support for continental initiatives, **Ms Montesi** echoed Dr Kazaura, and mentioned, in addition to the [African Single Electricity Market \(AfSEM\)](#), the [Continental Power System Masterplan \(CMP\)](#), also the [African Union Energy Efficiency Strategy \(AfEES\)](#), as key cornerstones of bi-continental collaboration. Together, these initiatives are driving the creation of a unified continental electricity market and grid. **Ms Montesi** also

noted that AEGERI would not only uphold the policy dialogue envisioned under the AEEP but also establish stronger links to regional and national-level actions under NDICI-Global Europe and the Global Gateway Strategy.

She underscored the vital role played by AEGERI, and Africa and Europe's joint commitment towards sustainable energy and economic growth. The ongoing efforts through AfSEM, CMP, and AfEES reflect the shared vision of establishing a harmonised, well-connected, and competitive continental African electricity market, ensuring secure, reliable, affordable, and sustainable electricity services for all Africans, and therefore fostering economic development.

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- **CARLA  
MONTESI**

## PANEL DISCUSSION

The panellists insightfully reflected on the urgency and shared commitment to address energy access challenges in Africa, while fostering sustainable, climate-compatible solutions. **Ms Elizabeth Press**, Director of Planning and Programme Support, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) emphasised the significance of shifting mindsets, and the need for beginning to understand energy in Africa as a service: "You don't need to think about energy unless you don't

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- **ELIZABETH  
PRESS**

have it. We need to think what it is for those who need it. We need to stop talking about energy as a commodity, but rather as a service", she said. **Dr Bärbel Kofler**, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, underscored the pivotal role of renewable energy in modern economies and noted that renewable energy solutions offer a more inclusive approach to energy than fossil fuels.

The discussion highlighted key priorities:

- **Future-Proof Energy Systems:** The need for energy systems that are adaptable to future challenges.
- **Public and Private Sector Collaboration:** The importance of mobilising both public and private sector resources for renewable energy development.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Acknowledging the diverse landscape of stakeholders and their roles in sustainable energy access.
- **Green Energy Access:** The shared responsibility of ensuring equitable access to green energy.

**“RENEWABLE ENERGY IS THE BASE OF A MODERN ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY. IT ALSO OFFERS A MORE PARTICIPATIVE APPROACH TO ENERGY.”**

- **BÄRBEL KOFLER**

Panellists also explored ways in which energy stakeholders can engage with communities to accelerate energy access, harnessing the potential of renewable energy systems such as hydropower. They stressed the importance of decentralisation and the need to work at various levels to reduce energy waste.

As the discussion closed, participants called for innovative strategies to invest more in sustainable energy, moving away from outdated technologies and embracing renewable solutions. They echoed the sentiment that energy should not be viewed as a mere commodity but as a service that transforms lives. The session concluded with a focus on creating a technical platform that fosters African solutions, reducing dependency on external partners and enabling regional implementation before national rollout. The panellists highlighted the significance of equal collaboration, creative problem-solving, and recognising the

unique challenges faced by different regions.

In a final statement, **Mr Johan van den Berg**, Head of Secretariat, Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP), called for a new conversation—one that acknowledges the diverse starting points, vocabularies, and, most importantly, the people, who lack access to energy.

The dialogue showcased the dedication of the **Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP)** to advance sustainable, climate compatible energy access for all. The annual AEEP Forum continues to serve as a vital platform for fostering collaboration and innovation in the energy sector, with the shared goal of building bridges for green growth and climate-compatible energy access.



## KEY TAKE-AWAYS FROM AEEP FORUM 2023 – BUILDING BRIDGES FOR GREEN GROWTH:

- There is a need to start **understanding energy in Africa and elsewhere as a service** rather than a commodity, advocating for equitable energy access.
- **Renewable energy is pivotal for modern economies**, with a focus on inclusivity and sustainable energy solutions.
- **Europe** is committed to supporting the global energy transition and stresses the importance of **a synergistic partnership between Africa and Europe**.
- Priority areas include **future-proof energy systems, public and private sector collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and ensuring equitable access to green energy**.
- The **Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative (AEGEI)** aims to deploy 50 GW of renewable **electricity generation capacity** and provide access to electricity for at least 100 million people in Africa, emphasising cooperation and partnership.
- Key elements for successful energy transitions in Africa and Europe are innovation in **sustainable energy investment, decentralisation, and recognising regional differences**, ultimately advocating for energy as a transformative service for all.



## Policymaker Breakfast at ACS: Bridging the Africa-Europe Energy Agendas

**Co-organised by Africa Europe Foundation (AEF) and Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP)**

On 5 September 2023, the Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP) and the Africa Europe Foundation (AEF) organised a policymaker breakfast on the side lines of the inaugural Africa Climate Summit (ACS), in Nairobi, Kenya, to introduce key custodians of Africa and Europe's energy and climate futures and plot a route to on-going, bicontinental engagement in the implementation of common agendas towards 2030 and 2063. The policymaker breakfast followed the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the AEEP Forum 2023 on Monday 4 September as a side event at ACS.



Through the participation of 28 high-level representatives, including energy ministers from Africa and Europe, private sector and NGO representatives, the discussion during the policymaker breakfast focused on ways to optimise bicontinental partnership in the spirit of mutual respect, while recognising the essential role public, private and civil society actors play in advancing a just and equitable energy transition. The discussion focused on how to achieve energy access and green industrialisation that can spur economic opportunities and human development. It was concluded that Africa and Europe can achieve monumental change by working together to 'fix energy in Africa'.

On the question of how Africa and Europe can engage in a mutually respectful manner it was concluded that while Africa and Europe individually are tackling issues of energy access and decarbonisation, the two continents can reach continent-specific targets by working together. The key pillars for achieving SDG7 and carrying out successful energy transitions were noted as: vision and will, favourable regulatory environments, bankable projects and appropriate financing. Advancing the goals of Africa's Agenda 2063 and the EU's goals of achieve climate neutrality by 2050 will only be possible through close collaboration and by building on existing means, including amplifying successful joint initiatives, rather than creating a multitude of new ones. Participants reminded that there are already examples of large-scale, successful African energy infrastructure projects, including, for example, the Noor Ouarzazate solar plant in Morocco, which has received support from the EU and EIB, the French Agency for Development (AFD) and the German Development Bank (KfW). Further successful collaboration on a continental level was highlighted





through the work on implementation of African-European initiatives such as the Continental Power System Masterplan (CMP) and the Africa Single Electricity Market (AfSEM). It was furthermore noted that a new chapter for Africa and Europe to working together can be found in, for example, the refining of critical minerals, essential for renewable energy technologies and especially energy storage solutions.

One pressing question raised by participants was why investments

towards renewable energy solutions are accelerating globally and still this trend is not visible in Africa. Although Africa accounts for almost 20% of the world's population and has rich resources, it still only attracts just under 2% of global clean energy investments. To change this pattern, participants stressed the fact that financing is available, but that project preparation for financial close is not good enough, there is a need to find ways to scale up bankable initiatives and match financing with existing, well-designed projects on the ground.

Furthermore, the question of carbon markets and carbon taxation was discussed, and the need for a fair market for carbon credits stressed, with some participants noting that Africa can take the lead and become a forerunner on carbon markets.

In closing, the participants expressed appreciation for the franc format of the discussion and agreed that the industrial revolution is accelerating, and it is a renewal one, where the renewable energy sources are everywhere and belong to everyone. By working together as neighbors both continents can achieve SDG7, or as one participant expressed, build 'the peace project of our time'.

## GALLERY



### About

The Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP) is Africa and Europe's gateway for joint action on a green energy future. With an unmatched overview of the political processes and initiatives across both continents, the AEEP maps, monitors and convenes the actions and stakeholders that drive the African and European energy transformation. Providing a forum for political dialogue, knowledge sharing and peer connections, it enables Africa and Europe to make progress on their path to a sustainable energy future.

### Tap into more information

-  [africa-eu-energy-partnership.org](https://africa-eu-energy-partnership.org)
-  [info@aep-secretariat.org](mailto:info@aep-secretariat.org)
-  [@AfricaEUEnergy](https://twitter.com/AfricaEUEnergy)

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