



G20 and Alliance for the Sahel: Is Germany More Talk than Action on Africa?

Chancellor Merkel has received widespread commendation for making Africa the centerpiece of her G20 Presidency and for recently supporting a G5 Sahel Joint Initiative—but despite these efforts, Germany has yet to deliver the ambitious, concrete financial commitments that are needed to concretely improve the security situation on the ground.

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Under Germany's presidency, Chancellor Merkel made history by making Africa the regional focus of the G20 for the first time. With the population of Europe's southern continent booming, and set to double by 2050, the German government made a convincing appeal to the world that forging a new, reformed partnership with Africa is the only way to maintain regional stability and development. According to the German Development Ministry, Africa needs 20 million new jobs each year to keep up with its bulging youth population,¹ which is only possible by boosting the private sector.

For months, the German Finance Ministry, G20 leaders, the International Monetary Fund, African Development Bank, and African ministers discussed and developed ambitious

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https://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/information_flyer/information_brochures/Materiale270_africa_marshallplan.pdf

reform frameworks, known as “compacts,” which would stimulate private sector growth by reforming business environments and mitigating risks.² But as the dust clears after months of negotiations, numerous high-level meetings and conferences, it appears that last week’s Summit fell short of delivering the financial and political capital necessary to support widespread implementation of ‘Partnership with Africa’ initiative.

While the Germans technically opened the Compact with Africa initiative to all African countries, ultimately the more specific conditions of the compacts led only Cote d’Ivoire, Morocco and Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia to participate. Due to the lack of financial incentive, combined with the complications of parallel debt negotiations with International Financial Institutions, most African states were not interested. On the other hand, the German Development Ministry managed to negotiate more tangible finance-backed agreements with just three countries, Tunisia, Cote d’Ivoire, and Ghana, which will be backed by a total €300 million.³

The new Sahel Alliance:

Just three days after the G20 Summit, on 12 July, Chancellor Merkel and President Macron met again in Paris for the Franco-German Ministerial Council, where ministers continued discussions on how to build medium-term cooperation and defense projects to support domestic and foreign security.

Most notably, Merkel and Macron, alongside the EU’s Vice President and High-Representative Mogherini, pushed forward on the creation of the G5’s Joint Sahel Force, which Macron recently endorsed in Bamako at the G5 Sahel Summit last week. The leaders, along with Foreign Ministers, signed the international “Alliance for the Sahel,” a plan that will focus on revitalizing security and development cooperation in the region.

While the exact detail of the Alliance have not been finalized, the ongoing discussions have suggested that this will work as donor coordination platform that would finance projects directly on the ground for better speed and efficiency. France has already announced that they will include their new AFD Sahel initiative, which includes €200 million in grants for G5 countries over the next five years,⁴ but Germany has yet to announce any commitment or concrete funding.

Unfortunately, these pledges pale in comparison to Merkel and Macron parallel discussion on European Defense, and their strong commitment to the European Commission’s new Defense Action Plan. The plan will set aside over €500 million in funding for joint research, development and procurement to create a more united set of European militaries. Under these auspices, both countries agreed to jointly create “a new generation of joint fighter jets,” which would be used by both air forces. Germany and France will also prioritize the

² <http://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/EN/Standardartikel/Topics/Featured/G20/2017-03-30-g20-compact-with-africa.html>

³ BMZ. “Africa and Europe: A New Partnership for Development, Peace and a Better Future.” 2017. A http://www.bmz.de/en/press/aktuelleMeldungen/2017/juni/170612_pm_072_Reform-partnerships-with-three-African-countries-agreed-by-Development-Ministry/index.html

⁴ <https://donortracker.org/country/france>

Eurodrone program, the EU's first military drone initiative, which should be operational by 2025.⁵

While these commitments are undoubtedly crucial to the future of European security, it is imperative that leaders begin to consider African stability as equally vital and pressing. Germany's stated strategies for Africa are ambitious and impressive, but they must be followed through with concrete, financial commitment and action. As Germany continues to establish itself as the West's most powerful player, it is shouldered with even more responsibility to push other world leaders in the right direction. This means that Chancellor Merkel must prove that there is real action behind all the talk on Africa.

Recommendations:

- The German Finance Ministry must further expand the Compact with Africa initiative to more African states, focusing specifically on the least developed countries that need assistance the most.
- The German government should commit both financial and tactical support to the G5 Sahel Force, integrating existing operations at the new German military base in Niamey.
- The German government should continue to solidify G20 support for the Partnership with Africa Initiative, and encourage other member states to engage with International Finance Institutions on ways to reform resource flows to African economies.

⁵ <http://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-and-emmanuel-macron-rekindle-german-french-romance/>