

Pastoralism at crossroads: an intensive week of lobbying the EU for pastoralism in Eastern Africa

by Emmanuel (Teba) Tebanyang

For a long time, a visit to Europe, as well as to other parts of the world, has been my desired dream. For starters, I love traveling, as it improves my view on global socio-political dynamics.

Recently, through our partner organisation, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Belgium (VSFB), which is also the focal point of CELEP (Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism), I received an invitation to represent our Karamoja Development Forum (KDF) and young Ugandans during the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) Africa Week in Brussels, Belgium. So I was in the Heart of Europe for five days!

The Africa–Europe Youth Summit was guided by the theme “Same Challenges, Equal Partnership, One Fight: Youth as Partners to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”. I took part in a series of events and side meetings and gave a lecture to students at Ghent University.

I was participating especially to make a case for the place of pastoralism in the global platforms and frameworks. I was participating to remind the world, global policymakers, young people, African leaders, European Union leaders, academia and all stakeholders that pastoralism must be recognised and supported as a livelihood, way of living and food-security system practised by and feeding over 120 million people across the world, supporting ecological balance of rangelands, and contributing to systems for reducing climate-change effects through greenhouse gases and adapting to climate change as well as contributing to global economies.

My Belgium visit was backed by my view that pastoralism was and is at a crossroads! Yes, with globalisation and its components. Policies of today need to be developed in a way that they facilitate support mechanisms that will sustain the current and the future desired situations. This includes abilities to feed the planet by 2050, when the global population is expected to reach a demanding size of about ten billion people. Global population is forecast to grow from the current 7.3 billion to about 8.5 billion in 2030 and 9.8 billion in 2050 and 11.2 billion in 2100. This alarming increase in human population calls for readiness to feed and provide adequate, efficient, reliable and decent services in health, accommodation and other sectors.

In 2015, the United Nations already started preparations for the expected global population. It shared what is now popularly called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. This set of 17 goals is aimed at ending poverty in all its forms, envisaging a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination. Additionally, the SDGs aim at increasing access to education, addressing migration, and combating climate change, among other things.

I was made aware that the African Union (AU) will be engaging with the European Union (EU) in a new partnership for the future. The AU–EU Partnership is the formal political

channel through which the EU and the African continent will work together, engage in political and policy dialogues and define their cooperative relationship. Plus, I learned that the EU and its Member States are the biggest donor to the African continent, contributing about € 20 billion a year in development aid through programmes at continental, regional and national level. About 20% of this aid is managed by the European Commission (EC). In fact, the EU contributes about 50% of all overseas development aid to Africa as of 2015 (<https://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/about-us/financing-partnership>). In these preparatory stages, the S&D Group provided an opportunity for youth and other categories of citizens to be heard prior to the new AU–EU partnership engagements.

In all attempts to create opportunities for pastoralism to be part of the AU–EU partnership, VSFB arranged meetings, sessions and lectures and even ensured that I took part in a panel discussion on Climate Change and Food Security in Africa. To see my speech during this session, please click [here](#). Koen Van Troos, the focal point of CELEP at VSFB, and I made sure that pastoralism was talked about in all sessions and meetings we took part in, particularly the Youth Summit, where pastoralism was recognised as a system for support and recognition under “sustainable agriculture”, one of the key critical areas. As an output of this summit, a resolution was prepared and formally submitted by the youth to the S&D Group and discussed in a plenary session. The final resolution, which can be found [here](#) and includes mention of pastoralism, will be a basis for future positioning of the S&D Group regarding EU–Africa relations.

To back up our contributions in support of pastoralism at the political level, Koen arranged for side meetings with representatives of the Directorate General of the EC in charge of Development Cooperation (DG DEVCO). My presentation for that meeting can be found [here](#). We met with the international aid/cooperation officer for Uganda and exchanged on pastoralism in Uganda, with cases from the Karamoja region. We explained the contributions of pastoralism to livelihoods and economies. We pointed out supportive and hindering policies and frameworks on pastoralism. We proposed policies and investment options for pastoralism in Africa, Uganda and Karamoja in particular and reminded the EC of the need to have a reference document on pastoralism in (Eastern) Africa so that the EU officially recognises the important values of this livelihood system. We concluded our week-long advocacy programme with a lecture at Ghent University, where we talked to international students of agriculture. We raised awareness of the youth as influencers of the future and called for innovative technologies that can support pastoralism now and in the future.

Of course, I have not even mentioned the delicious cuisines, sandwiches, strong beers, wonderful walks and train travel, the pee boy(s) and the cultural originality of Brussels and Ghent buildings. And I have not talked about the European Parliament, Station Europe, the Atrium, the Parliamentarium and the so many technologies inside, plus the so many people doing everything constructive in the so many towers of the EU Parliament.

I hope I will be able to share more of my experiences, including the turbulence experiences on Brussels Airlines, and the hospitality of everyone in Brussels and elsewhere.

Emmanuel Tebanyang – Policy Analyst at Karamoja Development Forum and CELEP partner in Uganda (www.kdfug.org)