



EBCAM 26th General Assembly
28-29 October 2021, 14:00 CEST
Paris, France
CIAN Headquarters
45 rue de la Chaussée d'Antin,
75009 Paris

Minutes

Thursday, 28 October 2021 @ 14:00 – 17:30

1. Attendance, apologies, and proxies

- **Afrika Verein** – Christoph Kannengiesser (CK); *(in the room)*
- **CBL-ACP** – Guy Bultynck (GB); Jacques Evrard (JE); *(online)*
- **CIAN** – Etienne Giros (EG); Stephen Decam (SD); Patrick Sevaistre (PS); Sandrine; Virgil; Former Ambassador; *(in the room)*
- **Invest Afrika** – Karen Taylor (KT); Mélusine de Chazal; *(online)*
- **SWEACC** – Jan Furuvald (JF); Kerstin Borglin (KB); *(online)*
- **Swisschamber-Africa** – Andreas Schweizer (ASch); *(online)*
- **Hellenic- African Chamber** – Sotiris Mousouris (SM); Vangelis Kamaris; *(online)*
- **Ahead Global** – Zoltan Szedlacsko (ZS); *(online)*
- **NABC** – Rosmarijn Fens (RF); *(in the room)*
- **NABA** - Eivind Fjeldstad (EF); Mathilde Emilie Thue; *(online)*
- **CEMA** – Denis Ruyant; *(online)*
- **EBCAM** – Alexandros Spachis (AS); Petros Makris-Kourkoulos (PMK); Alina Sandeck (ASa) *(in the room)*

Invited speakers-observers for the second day

- **European Commission** – Cecile Billaux (CB); Cyril Cayag (CS) *(in the room)*

EBCAM President Etienne Giros (EG) opens EBCAM's 26th General Assembly (GA) by welcoming all participants at 14:07 CEST. The attendance sheet is signed and there are no apologies nor proxies. Out of 13 official members all 11 voting member-organizations are represented. **EG** regrets that the pandemic results in relatively low in-person participation, hoping an increased number of participants can attend in person in the future. He also recommends that members avoid last-minute cancellations. For this meeting, two members cancelled physical participation at very short notice, which incurs costs for the organisers. He also underlines that the payment of the membership fees is essential for small associations with low budgets. There are no further comments from EBCAM's



members. **EG** presents the agenda that is approved unanimously without any comments or remarks.

2. Approval of previous Minutes

EG presents the previous minutes of EBCAM's 24th (Lisbon) and 25th (online) GA which are approved unanimously without any comments or remarks.

3. EBCAM Administration and Management

EBCAM Secretary General Alexandros Spachis (AS) informs EBCAM's members that the secretariat staff continued working despite Covid-19 restrictions and difficulties. Instead of physically attending meetings and conferences, more 'opinions - position papers' have been published (*the list of 8 titles was distributed by paper and by e-mail*) whilst the staff virtually attended a lot of meetings and webinars online. EBCAM staff adapted quickly to the new working conditions, working remotely and respecting Belgian authorities' regulations. Now a period has started where the Brussels secretariat has started to work more regularly at the office as well. **EBCAM COO Petros Makris-Kourkoulos** is regularly going to the office of Rue Montoyer 24 (2-3 times per week) and he meets at least once per week with the research assistant **Alina Sandeck (ASa)** who works most of the time remotely from her residence in Brussels. The goal is to increase the frequency of working at the office within the next year 2022 if the COVID-19 hygiene circumstances allow it. Remote working during the pandemic period did not have a negative impact on the communication among the Brussels team, which was excellent through digital means with the workload being executed in full. Moreover, the new way of working remotely with the research assistants has proved to be very effective. During the last year and a half the secretariat was very productive with circulation of the newsletter twice per week, researching various topics, communicating with members and continuing external contacts, research and analysis. Furthermore, the Secretariat has been very active in circulating to appropriate external contacts the many opinions that the organisation has produced over this period.

4. EBCAM: Organization and Governance

AS informs that the EBCAM secretariat has paid attention to membership with the goal to identify associations / organisations from European countries that are not yet represented in EBCAM (Italy, Spain, Malta, Finland) for potential membership.

AS confirms that EBCAM is already operating under the new bylaws adopted and published earlier this year in June. Within this framework and during the virtual General Assembly last June, **EG** was re-elected as president of EBCAM for another three years and **Jan Furuvald (JF)**, Chairman of the Swedish-East African Chamber of Commerce and EBCAM member, was appointed as a member of the Executive Board replacing **Karen Taylor (KT)**, CEO of EBCAM's British member association Invest Africa. **AS** thanked **KT** for her honoured



services and contribution to the Executive Board during the last three years and welcomed **JF** to the new Board. All other members of the Board remain the same.

5. Various topics and other matters of concern related to the private sector

EG raises the following concerns related to the private sector:

The public development aid from the EU as well as development aid from European states is only made available through public organizations. NGOs constitute the only exception and receive a portion of approximately 5%; therefore, 95% of the development aid goes to the public sector. **EG**, representing the French member **CIAN**, finds these figures very concerning and advocates that a small part of the aid should be dedicated to the private sector through subsidies, loans and equities. In order to be able to convince public partners of that proposal, **CIAN**'s idea is to communicate said proposal to the EU institutions through **EBCAM** and propose practical solutions to let financing pass through the private sector. **EG** sees this as a potential mission of **EBCAM** and asks for other members' opinions. **KT** takes the floor to inform **EBCAM**'s members about their current project with the UK Government to provide the private sector with development aid. The idea is to improve international trade by gathering and unifying different branches of the government through one resource: a website which can be seen as a B2B platform. On this website, all organizations interested in investing in Africa are coordinated. The goal is to internationally gather as many companies as possible to better understand where and how to generate business in Africa as well as tracking how substantial business activities in Africa are already developing.

Christoph Kannengiesser (CK) informs the attendees that right now international rules and regulations do not, under any circumstances, allow for subsidies to be granted to enterprises, which underlines the need for reforms within the EU. Currently, the economic risk of investments in Africa is not covered and for smaller companies it is difficult to get access to funding because banks are not willing to finance their projects in Africa.

EG proposes that **EBCAM** advocates the idea of making funding available to the private sector as well to the **Head of Unit C4 – Private Sector and Trade DG DEVCO Cecile Billaux (CB)** who will be joining the GA the following day. **EG** adds that private sector investments must be increased to, among other things, be able to compete with China's rising investments in the African continent. **CK** takes the floor again to argue that a tool needs to be set up where companies can get funding, similar of the "Soft Loan" tool in Austria which is currently the only tool of its kind in the EU. Archipelago is the first EU project that is non-profit and does not have a pure focus on development aid. Additionally, the German GIZ has launched a project with the goal to create jobs in Africa but the eligibility criteria and possibilities for companies to apply and receive such financing are still very limited since the project still follows the traditional development assistance philosophy. Then, **EG** takes the floor to emphasise that the present issue is a political issue which should be addressed among different departments of the European Commission, such as the Industrial Policy (GROW), Trade as well as the one for International Partnerships (INTPA). On this matter, **AS** takes the floor emphasising the fact that **EBCAM** has been making big efforts to lobby and advocate in favor of private sector's involvement in EU funding focusing on the idea of



going beyond traditional development assistance aid. **EG** proposes that EBCAM writes a position paper on that matter, to be submitted to all members, followed by the development of a strategy of communication and political lobby. The next EU-Africa Business Forum is a good opportunity to launch this initiative. **EG** argues that the initiation of project Archipelago was linked to the European concerns of uncontrollable, irregular migration. It is important to keep track of the developing policy and the EU's goal regarding Africa. He proposes that EBCAM pursues two courses of action: communicating EBCAM's position paper to the EU institutions as well as urging EBCAM's members to share the paper with each country's government. In the same discussion **EG** reports of his recent observation in Côte d'Ivoire where financial aid, mainly directed at vocational training and infrastructure, from the US to the country, was distributed through the MCA Entity which is a collaboration between the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and that was created solely for that purpose. He has never before heard of such a model, where large amounts of money are distributed to businesses through such an organization in France or the EU. He highlights that this process seemed rather efficient, proposes to suggest a similar approach to **EU-INTPA** and get their reaction on it.

On another related matter, **CK** takes the floor to raise his concern regarding medium-sized companies' ability to continue participating in tendering for projects under the new rule of the World Bank. The new rule dictates that payment is made only at the end of a project, thus imposing a substantial strain on the financial resources of the tenderers. This leads to an increased share of World Bank investments (financed not insubstantially by European contributions) being awarded to Chinese companies in Africa because they are more likely to rapidly obtain the necessary financing to carry out the project obligations before they get payment. **Rosmarijn Fens (RF)** concurs in the observation of that problem. **EG** proposes to communicate this issue to the World Bank through the EU, especially since the EU has links and channels to the World Bank. This will be a separate demarche to the one practiced by appropriate departments of the EU, who sit-in as observers and coordinate with the EU member state that sits in word bank management. Is this also a concern of US companies tendering for world bank projects?

Another issue is the Due Diligence Legislation that the EC-EP plans to propose, adopt and impose on European companies, an issue for which there is no unanimity and consensus has not yet been reached. The EC proposal has not been published yet, apparently there are internal discussions in progress. There is a need to continue communicating this issue to European governments and EU institutions, in particular the Commission and parliament. All members agree to monitor this topic and, with the appropriate timing, react, to express and remind the EU of EBCAM's position (EBCAM has already communicated two position papers to the EU). **EG** undertakes to address a new letter with industry concerns to the European Commissionaire for Industry Mr. Bretton.

On another matter, **EG** proposes for EBCAM to take part as an official partner of the African Business Forum in Nis, France, which would be free of charge. The proposal was unanimously approved.



Lastly, **Virgil Ivanes (VI)** talks about the implementation of the European Barometer. Out of EBCAM's 13 members, only the Portuguese, the Danish, Ahead Global, CEMA and CBL-ACP are not participating. Upon request, changes have been made to NABC's, Invest Africa's and SWEACC's survey. However, so far, only CIAN, with approximately 50 responses, and Afrika Verein, with 7 complete and 4 incomplete responses, have started the survey. **VI** stresses that members must start distributing the survey by 30 November 2021 to get sufficient feedback until December. It is each member's responsibility to launch the survey in the following week and monitor the implementation of the survey.

EG then proposes to take a 5-minute break before finishing with the last point of the day.

6. EBCAM relation with EU Institutions and other Organisations

AS informs the GA about the progress on the organisation of the EU-Africa Business Forum (EABF). After the last EU head of states meeting, the final dates still must be confirmed. For now, the Political Summit is planned for 17-18 February 2022 and the EABF for 16-17 February 2022 with the heads of states and CEOs dinner on the 16th of the same month. At the current state, EBCAM is working collaboratively with three Brussels based European business organisations: BusinessEurope, Eurochambres and European Entrepreneurs CEA-PME. All of them were approached by the EU Commission to work together and to contribute to the design and implementation of a Business Forum with an actual focus on business and private sector investment instead of development aid. EBCAM is currently scheduled to have the lead in four high level panels linked to 4 working groups covering the following topics of the Business Forum: agribusiness through NABC in association with CIAN, automotive and mobility through Afrika Verein in collaboration with AAAM, renewable energy, initially lead by Invest Africa and now agreed to be undertaken by Afrika Verein, and Health through CIAN.

EBCAM would also like to play a key role in the preparation of the text of conclusions and also have the possibility to address the plenary at an appropriate high profile slot.

AS mentions that due to a lot of delays in the EABF resulting from COVID restrictions, those four working groups must be re-confirmed. The idea of the Business Forum is to contribute to the creation of more permanent networks-structures, hopefully with a permanent platform-network of working groups that will work on thematic topics instead of only having a one-off large-scale event every three years. **Jacques Evrard (JE)** proposes to stay in contact and cooperate with the other Brussels based European Business Organisations which are also co-organisers in the EABF to ensure the joint efforts made so far. **EG** stresses the importance to communicate EBCAM's vital role in the organization of the Forum.

Furthermore, **AS** and **Petros Makris-Kourkoulos (PMK)** mention EBCAM's efforts to establish further partnerships with other organizations. Besides the expansion of EBCAM through the acquisition of new members, EBCAM's goal is also to find further partners which enable the exchange of opinions and knowledge. The idea is to refrain from competition with these organizations and to encourage exchanges and facilitate



networking. The new updates regarding partnerships are: MoUs with EBOs of Rwanda and Togo, the association of Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce ASCAME and an effort to have MoUs with EACCIA, the East African Chamber of Industry and Agriculture and the EBOWW, the European Business Organisations Worldwide Network, and other organisations. The main goal is to achieve an easy communication and network with African counterparts to facilitate the communication among our members. On this framework, we attempted to have a first discussion with Eurochambres. **JE** proposes to talk to EASME on the same matter with main goal to find new partners and funding.

Moreover, EBCAM Secretary General (**AS**) participated as panelist (in person) at the 61st Conference of the European Trade Promotion Organisations' Association (ETPOA) on "Connecting Europe with Africa: promoting economic collaboration and dialogue". The conference was hosted in Athens by Enterprise Greece (Hellenic Investment and Foreign Trade Company), on 21-22 October 2021. The hybrid conference was attended by senior and top executives of European Export Promotion Organisations, representatives of Directorates General of the European Commission and international organisations such as the UN and OECD, as well as senior executives of European and African companies in the energy and high-tech sectors. During the conference, (**AS**) had the chance to meet with representatives from other European Trade Promotion Organisation and discuss topics of common interest in the framework of a potential partnership between them and EBCAM.

EG closes the first day of the GA at 17:01.

Friday, 29 October 2021 @ 09:30 – 12:30

EG opens the second day of the GA at 9:34.

7 Invited EU Official: Cecile Billaux, Head of Unit C4 – Private Sector and Trade DG DEVCO

EG welcomes **Cecile Billaux (CB)** and her colleague **Cyril Cayag (CS)**. All participants introduce themselves.

CB informs the participants that she joined INTPA one year ago replacing Antti Karounen and that they are open for EBCAM's input. **CB** and **CS** proceed to give updates on INTPA's policies towards Africa and the progress made regarding the Business Forum. Currently, the dates of the EABF have not been confirmed yet. **CS** proceeds to present the current state and developments regarding the EABF and provides a presentation ([see presentation](#)). EBCAM's responsibilities at the EABF have not changed in the meantime, however, **CB** and **CS** inform the members on their intention to exclude renewable energies as a topic due to a recent event organized by the Commission that solely focused on renewables. After the criticism of that decision by EBCAM's SecGen **AS** and CK's public statement that Afrika Verein is ready to undertake the lead of this working group – high-level panel, **CB** and **CS** agreed to keep it as one of the high-level panels. It is confirmed that EBCAM's main responsibility at the high-level panels in EABF is the organisation and moderation of debates.



EG then proceeds to raise his concerns about the exclusion of the private sector with regards to development aid and missing subsidies. He also talks about his experience with the American project implemented in Côte d'Ivoire. **CB** asks EBCAM to write a paper laying out a plan for a project inspired by the one from the US to be able to further discuss the topic. Furthermore, she expresses her goal to approach development aid in a more innovative way and work hand in hand with the private sector. This should be achieved by an investment package, which provides the private sector with financing in a more efficient way as well as making the EABF an annual forum and, as a first step, getting the private sector more involved through the head of state dinner at the Business Forum. **CB** expresses her interest to get a better look into the private sector cooperation and asks EBCAM's members if the Intra African Trade Fair provides a good overview. **KT** offers her help due to being heavily involved in the organisation.

Overall, it is concluded that direct interaction with INTPA and on the EC departments is needed to improve business and strengthen the European private sector's presence in Africa.

8 Tour de table and Members' missions in Africa

KT reports that, due to their Annual Africa Debate taking place virtually for the second time, revenue generation has changed; the most important source of income now is sponsorships. She also talks about experience at GBF in Dubai where all 54 African countries were represented showing the strong commitment of the Dubai Government to investments, especially in infrastructure projects, in Africa. Dubai has placed itself between European/US and African trade. **KT** will also attend the Intra African Trade Fair in South Africa. **KT** informs the GA that Ghana received most investments of the UK Government, especially in agriculture. Additionally, Zambia but also Egypt and thirdly Morocco have been very important markets. **EG** asks **KT** about the economic climate after Brexit and its consequences on the economic relationship between UK and Africa. **KT** responds that so far it is very difficult to tell if the relationship has changed because the economy has been overshadowed by Covid-19 and it is difficult to estimate if certain developments and changes are due to Brexit or due to Covid-19. Overall, UK's labour market as well as supply chains have been struggling and taxes have gone up. However, after the pandemic business seems to be getting back on its feet again. **AS** confirms with **KT** that the UK Government provides financing to the private sector within the earlier mentioned project and **KT** clarifies that the government provides financing through consultancies and that those work closely with Invest Africa since their knowledge on the continent is needed.

Andreas Schweizer (ASch) reports that a recent 3-day meeting on new technologies, fintech development, and digitalization together with Germany and Austria was postponed as well as most of the activities of the association. Swisschamber-Africa has meetings planned for February and March next year. He has noticed that oil production in Algeria has declined and



that the country is interested in exporting hydrogen to Europe. Additionally, digitalization and the agriculture sector have been pushed. Promo 2022 with 1000 exhibitors will take place next year on Cameroon and other African countries.

Denis Ruyant (DR) informs that focus countries for webinars have been Madagascar as well as Kenya and Djibouti. CEMA has been working closely with the Monaco Economy Board and events have been held, and will continue to be held, online. Last week, the ambassadors of Burundi, Gabon and Madagascar met with CEMA. The next mission is to Morocco. The main problem that CEMA is facing is the fact that the private sector in Monaco is not very supportive in promoting investments. In this framework, CEMA looks for support from French companies. CEMA tried to increase their memberships to 24 this year.

RF reports that NABC has been very active in Egypt and recently went on a group mission with a group of Dutch companies. The focus was laid on agriculture. The association also had its first physical meeting since the start of the pandemic a couple of months ago and celebrated their 75th birthday. Currently, the Netherlands are in the process of forming a new cabinet and the public-private finance institute has primarily focused on Africa supporting Dutch SMEs that want to invest in emerging markets.

Vangelis Kamaris (VK) from Greece reports that the Hellenic-African Chamber has been organizing a couple of webinars recently on Ethiopia and Senegal. The association is planning on having and organising more webinars in the near future additionally to a trade mission in Rwanda, Ghana and Uganda. He highlighted the military coups in Sudan, Mali and in Guinea and mentioned the fragile political status in Libya, Tunisia and Morocco. On the contrary, Tanzania is going back to normality with market standards. Last but not least, Ghana is highly stressed and fragile again with the national party unlikely to be the winner in the elections.

JF reports that SWEACC recently held a health cluster meeting in person while also planning an event in Nairobi. Focus areas have been ICT, fintech, healthtech, edtech and a little bit of Greentech while the association's focus countries are Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

JE reports from Belgium that most meetings have been held virtually. CBL-ACP is planning a mission to Ghana and a huge delegation to the Congo. Additionally, the association has been focussing on Côte d'Ivoire and is organising a mission to Mauritius and Rwanda. A focus area has been the diamond sector and the association is keeping an eye on Turkey who seem to be becoming a strong competitor. Lastly, he mentions the rumour about Bolorre's intention to sell its African operations to Chinese interests.

Eivind Fjelstad (EF) from Norway reports that NABA is planning a business mission on 22-26 November to Ghana and Nigeria before that. NABA has a very positive outlook on Tanzania after the recent election of the new president. There is also a new government in Norway. **EF** joined the meeting in Dubai.

CK reports that in the light of Covid-19 the organization of events is getting better again. Afrika Verein realized that the organisation of roundtables works very well. The association is



planning a mission to Ethiopia and have been maintaining a steady number of members during the pandemic, with those numbers starting to increase now. Currently, Germany is forming a new government which is likely to be different in comparison to the previous years. Two likely coalition partners are SPD which is in favour of investments in Africa and Die Grünen (the green party) which are not so “Africa-friendly”.

Zoltan Szedlacszo (ZS) hopes that Ahead Global will be more successful next year as this year the association suffered a lot with a postponed mission in East Africa.

EG representing CIAN reports that CIAN has lost 10 members in total over the pandemic. The two ailing sectors are transportation and aviation as well as tourism and hotels. CIAN is also facing difficulties with political instabilities in a few countries such as Mali, Benin and Guinea. The agriculture sector seems to be the key sector also within Emmanuel Macron’s Great Green Wall mission. France will have next EU presidency from the 1st semester of 2022.

9 Next meetings

Regarding the hosting of the next meeting in March, **CK** proposes to organize it in Berlin, Germany. The second GA of the year will be in Stockholm, Sweden in June.

10 AOB

Nothing added.