



## Plan África: balance de quince años de compromiso español

### Resumen:

Con el telón de fondo de la crisis de los cayucos, el Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación aprobaba en mayo de 2006 el I Plan África. Se trataba de un nuevo proyecto que contribuía a reformular la falta de una estrategia global y estructurada en las relaciones con la región. Además de Iberoamérica y el Magreb, ahora España se comprometía a considerar África subsahariana como una prioridad de su política exterior. El Plan África se ha convertido en la herramienta de trabajo que ha guiado las relaciones entre España y los países de esta región durante los últimos quince años. En este tiempo, la presencia política, comercial e institucional de España en África subsahariana se ha incrementado, y se ha trabajado con acierto para establecer un nuevo compromiso con el continente en el ámbito de la paz y la seguridad, de la lucha contra la pobreza, de la cooperación para ordenar los flujos migratorios, de la promoción de los intercambios comerciales y la inversión, y de la cooperación cultural y científica.

### Palabras clave:

Plan África, África subsahariana, política exterior española, cooperación al desarrollo, comercio exterior.

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## Introduction

In the 1980s, the Egyptian thinker Samir Amin defended the so-called 'disconnection theory'. He believed that in order for there to be development in Africa, the countries of the South needed to disengage from the Western economy. During the Cold War this idea was inapplicable, but after the fall of the Wall the countries of the North practised this disconnection to some extent by reducing their presence in Africa, both politically and economically. Now, in recent years, Africa is reconnecting with globalisation, through a combination of economic development and attention to the threats and opportunities it holds.<sup>1</sup> The African continent is becoming a key player in the current global strategic reorientation, especially for China, the European Union and other middle powers such as Turkey.

In the 21st century, Africa has made clear progress in democratisation, political participation and conflict resolution. By 2020, six of the economies with the highest GDP growth rates in the world were in sub-Saharan Africa and 26 African countries were on track to become middle-income countries in the same year. Africa has the youngest middle class in the world, and some 18 million Africans enter the labour market each year.<sup>2</sup> The continent has embarked on initiatives to profoundly transform its economies, such as the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area in 2019.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Spanish foreign and cooperation policy and Spanish companies turned their attention to Latin America. But the worsening of the migration problem, with the massive influx of migrants between 2005 and 2006, became an occasion for a new orientation and a major boost to Spanish foreign policy towards sub-Saharan Africa. In 2006, 31,861 immigrants from Africa arrived on the Canary Islands' coasts, and the government considered that it had to work to organise migratory flows and that the best way to achieve this was to agree on appropriate regulatory frameworks with the countries of origin.

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<sup>1</sup> SILVELA DÍAZ-CRIADO, E. 'La reconexión con África', IEEE Papers, 2014, [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2014/DIEEEO84-2014\\_ReconexionAfrica\\_Silvela\\_DiazCriado.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2014/DIEEEO84-2014_ReconexionAfrica_Silvela_DiazCriado.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Africa Focus 2023, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, 2021.

## 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan

In May 2006, in the context of the *cayuco* boat migration crisis, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation approved the 1st Africa Plan.

The disparate actions that Spain had so far directed towards sub-Saharan Africa required a rethink, and this new project contributed to reformulating the lack of a global and structured strategy in relations with the region. Attempts to articulate a Spanish foreign policy had been made in the past. Thus, the Action Plan for Sub-Saharan Africa (2001-2002) was launched, which established—from a strictly political point of view—an increase in contacts and visits to and from Africa by members of the government; an increase in forums and business missions to these countries; the establishment of new conventional frameworks, especially in the economic and migratory aspects with the region; and the objective of increasing cooperation and cultural, commercial and investment exchanges with different countries. The plan was only partially realised, but it was a first effort to relaunch policy towards sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup>

The Spanish government's 1st Africa Plan was conceived as a national strategy for a region. In addition to Latin America and the Maghreb, with this project the government now pledged to consider sub-Saharan Africa as a foreign policy priority. Since then, the Africa Plan has become the working tool that has guided relations between Spain and the countries of sub-Saharan Africa over the last fifteen years.

### *1<sup>st</sup> Africa Plan (2006-2008)*<sup>4</sup>

The drafting and initial publication of the Plan was clearly linked to the so-called 'migration crisis' and the treatment it received in the media. Thus, the document was accused at the time of serving primarily a communication function rather than a political and strategic planning and prioritisation function. However, fifteen years later, we can take stock of the commitment of the various successive governments to this new priority of Spanish foreign policy.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the development of the plan also takes place in the context of the formulation of the EU Strategy for Africa. Indeed, a year before the Spanish

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<sup>3</sup> GIL-CASARES, R. 'África subsahariana. La nueva prioridad'. FAES Notebooks April/June 2010.

<sup>4</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Plan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, 2006.

plan, in December 2005, the European Council adopted this strategy to structure a framework for action by the Member States to support Africa's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The First Africa Plan sets out seven objectives for Spanish foreign action on the continent that respond to both the defence of Spanish interests and the pursuit of the general interest:

- I. Spanish participation in the consolidation of democracy, peace and security in Africa.
- II. Spain's contribution to the fight against poverty and the development agenda in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- III. Promoting cooperation to manage migratory flows.
- IV. Active participation in the European Union's Strategy for Africa
- V. Trade and investment promotion, with special attention on fisheries relations and energy security.
- VI. Strengthening of cultural and scientific cooperation and implementation of cultural projects in support of development objectives.
- VII. Strengthening Spain's political and institutional presence in Africa.

With regards to the geographical priorities for action, the plan explains that the adequacy of the means available to achieve the seven objectives requires prioritisation among the 47 countries that make up sub-Saharan Africa. The document establishes three categories:

- Of priority interest: countries where all the objectives of the Plan overlap to a greater or lesser extent (Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Nigeria, Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Ethiopia and Mauritania).
- Of specific interest: these are countries of importance for Spain's external action, although this importance is concentrated in a specific area or in a smaller number of areas compared to the priority group (Cape Verde, Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Republic of Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles and Tanzania).

- Special monitoring: these are countries which, due to their internal instability, may pose a risk to peace and security (Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Zimbabwe).

In total it refers to 27 countries.

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Africa Plan (2009-2012)*<sup>5</sup>

This new Plan aims to consolidate the progress of the previous one and to build on lessons learned. In addition, it introduces new features such as the strengthening of the regional focus on Africa and the inclusion of three new cross-cutting objectives (human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change). Another important improvement is the introduction of advances in the systematisation of monitoring and social participation instruments and mechanisms, through the Bureau for Africa.

The plan has six general objectives, formulated differently from the seven in the 1st Plan, but which can be considered equivalent.

With regard to the choice of countries, this 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan presents the geographical priorities following a regional approach. In this way, the document makes the following classification:

- Continental dimension: the African Union (AU).
- Regional dimension: Spain will focus special attention on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). On the other hand, the document also states that it will deepen its relationship with the other regional economic communities: Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).
- Attention by country: In West Africa: in addition to Mauritania, the ECOWAS countries, in particular Senegal, Mali, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Niger, Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Ghana and Cape Verde; in the Horn of Africa: the IGAD countries, in particular Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan; in Central Africa: the ECCAS countries, in particular Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe; in the South, the SADC

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<sup>5</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa Plan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, 2009.

countries, in particular South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In total it refers to 25 countries.

### *3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan*<sup>6</sup>

The main novelty of this third document is the intention to make civil society and the Spanish private sector the protagonists of the plan. This was explained by the then Spanish Foreign Minister, now Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, in the introduction to the document:

*The government lacks the public resources to make a significant impact on Africa's growth and development, but this should not stop us. Spanish civil society and the private sector have the potential to become decisive actors on the African continent. This is our strength. We should aspire for Spain to play a role in Africa comparable to the one we played in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s.*

This 3<sup>rd</sup> Plan is based on a new approach: the previous Africa plans boosted our country's institutional deployment and promoted Development Cooperation. These efforts have begun to bear fruit. The next step now is to bring the rest of the Spanish actors closer to Africa: companies, universities, NGOs, etc.

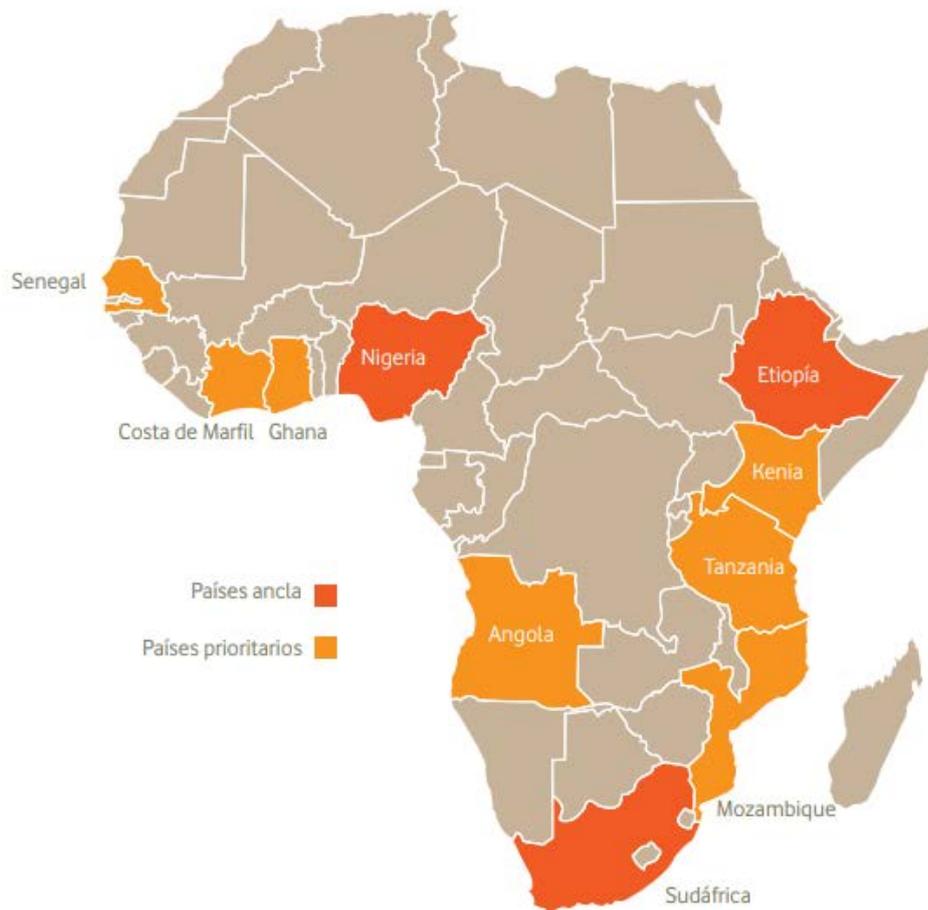
With regards to the objectives, this third document reduces them to four: peace and security, sustainable development rooted in economic growth, institutional strengthening and orderly, regular and safe mobility.

As for the geographical priorities for action, while the First Plan referred to 27 countries and the Second Plan to 25, this third document reduces them to ten. It classifies these ten states into two general categories: five partners that it calls 'priorities for Spain's foreign policy in sub-Saharan Africa'—South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola and Senegal—and five partners that it refers to as 'preferential' because they are 'stable countries with great potential for economic growth'—Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania. Furthermore, it highlights the role of Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia as 'anchor countries', states that, due to their regional prominence, can act as

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<sup>6</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, 2019.

exporters of stability to their neighbours, absorbing intra-African migratory flows in an orderly manner.



**Figure 1: Ten countries highlighted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan. Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation.**

In addition, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plan envisages the establishment of a reinforced partnership with Senegal to develop the actions and tools envisaged in the document as a pilot experience. The evaluation of this pilot experience will allow the establishment of new and strengthened partnerships with other countries, continuing, in the second instance, with Angola.

But perhaps the most novel aspect is that for the first time in a document of these characteristics, the government expresses its aspiration for Spain to become an actor in sub-Saharan Africa with a role as relevant as the one it played in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s. In the same vein, the Africa Focus 2023 was presented on 29 March 2021. It is the action programme of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan and connects the objectives of the

latter with the External Action Strategy 2021-2024. In his speech during the presentation of the Africa Focus, Pedro Sánchez assured that “we are going to go a step further, we want to turn this decade, which began in a somewhat complex way with the pandemic, into Spain’s decade in Africa. This is the soul of the programme”.<sup>7</sup>

### **Review of cooperation to control migration flows<sup>8</sup>**

Prior to the first Africa Plan, Spain had already signed migration agreements with some countries, but these were mainly focused on the readmission of people in an irregular situation by their countries of origin. Since the approval of the 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Plan, however, Spain has sought greater collaboration with countries of origin and transit through the creation of a network of Migration Cooperation Framework Agreements, also known as ‘new generation agreements’. The purpose of these is to establish a bilateral framework for the regulation and management of labour migration flows. These new generation agreements have represented a shift from the previous model, which focused exclusively on readmission.

In this regard, Spain has signed this type of agreement with the most relevant countries for the purposes of controlling migratory flows to our country: Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Mali, and Niger. For its part, an agreement has been signed with Senegal to prevent the emigration of unaccompanied minors, with Nigeria an agreement on repatriation, and with Mauritania an agreement on migratory labour flows.

In addition, agreements have been reached to carry out joint patrols with Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry with the aim of reinforcing these countries’ capacities in terms of control and surveillance of jurisdictional waters and in the fight against irregular migration. In this way, control tasks have been reinforced with surveillance missions and joint patrols in West African waters, under the coordination of the European agency FRONTEX, which have intercepted and managed to prevent the departure of many illegal vessels.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/intervenciones/Paginas/2021/prsp29032021.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> The content of this section has been extracted from documents requested by the author, through the transparency portal, from the Directorate General for Africa of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. The following documents have been provided: Review of Execution of the 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Plan, 2009 and 2010 follow-up reports on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa Plan, Review of the 9<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa Plan, Results of 2009 and 2010 indicators.

The Regional Coordination Centre in the Canary Islands has also been set up to coordinate the actions of all the administrations involved in the fight against illegal immigration from sub-Saharan Africa, Western Sahara and Mauritania to the Canary Islands.

Spain has also supported the creation of the Centre for Migration Flows in Senegal and the Centre for Information and Management of Migration in Mali, both of which are now operational.

In order to help channel legal migration flows, recruitment of sub-Saharan workers at origin has been encouraged and facilitated, especially from Senegal, where a Department of Labour and Social Affairs has been opened.

Finally, a Spain-ECOWASDE Fund for Migration and Development has been created with an endowment of 10 million euros.

### **Review of the strengthening of the political and institutional presence in Africa<sup>9</sup>**

Since the approval of the 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Plan, six new embassies have been opened (Sudan, Mali, Cape Verde, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Niger)—a total of 22—and diplomatic antennae in Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This is the third largest diplomatic deployment in Africa among EU member states (after France and Germany). In addition, ties have been strengthened with African organisations considered priorities in the Africa Plan, such as the AU and ECOWAS.

New Technical Cooperation Offices and cooperation antennae have been created; Economic and Commercial Counsellors (Accra, Malabo and Nairobi), sectoral attachés for the Interior (Nouakchott, Accra, Bissau, Conakry, Bamako, Banjul) and for Labour and Social Affairs (Dakar).

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## **Review of contributions to the maintenance of peace and security and the prevention of conflict<sup>10</sup>**

Spain has strengthened and expanded military and police cooperation with the subcontinent, especially in West Africa. Defence Cooperation Agreements have been signed with Cape Verde, South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Gabon and Mauritania. In addition, the Ministry of Defence maintains military training programmes with Cape Verde, Mauritania, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique and South Africa, and has strengthened and supported the development of the military capabilities of the armed and security forces of Mauritania, Senegal and Cape Verde.

The presence of the National Intelligence Centre has been reinforced in countries such as Senegal, Mali, Sudan and Ethiopia, and cooperation agreements on the fight against crime have been signed with Senegal and Cape Verde.

Spain collaborates with various programmes of regional organisations such as the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme, the IGAD Counter-Terrorism Institutional Strengthening Programme and the African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism, based in Algiers and under the auspices of the African Union.

The capabilities of the Gulf of Guinea littoral states have been strengthened with the support of a navy vessel deployed for limited periods in the waters of the region, either within the strictly national framework or through the EU Coordinated Maritime Presences, with the mission to contribute to the security of the maritime environment of the West African coast, to the fight against piracy and to the conduct of military cooperation activities.

Spanish participation in EU actions in the Sahel has been strengthened, particularly through the leadership of projects such as the Rapid Action Groups.

Spain is currently participating in nine military missions in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>11</sup>, with around 1,000 troops:

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.defensa.gob.es/misiones/en\\_exterior/actuales/](https://www.defensa.gob.es/misiones/en_exterior/actuales/)

<i>EUTM-CAR (Central African Republic)</i>	European Union mission to the Central African Republic for the training and reform of the Central African Armed Forces.
<i>Defence Diplomacy and Cooperative Security</i>	Spanish military personnel are helping to increase security in this unstable region of West Africa.
<i>EUTM-Somalia</i>	The European Union trains Somali forces to combat terrorism and piracy.
<i>EUTM-Mali</i>	The EU mission helps the Malian army to improve its military capabilities, with the aim of it regaining the country's territorial integrity.
<i>Ivory Detachment (Senegal)</i>	Contribution to the strategic transport of regional capacities of AFISMA participating countries.
<i>EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta</i>	The European Union's counter-piracy operation in the Indian Ocean.
<i>Cooperative Security in Mauritania</i>	Spain supports Mauritania with a bilateral programme of training activities in the field of Cooperative Security.
<i>Cooperative Security in Senegal</i>	The Senegalese authorities are asking Spain for assistance to reinforce or generate the military capabilities of their armed forces.
<i>EUTM Mozambique</i>	EU mission aimed at training and assisting the armed forces to protect the civilian population and restore security in Cabo Delgado province.

### Review of cultural and scientific cooperation<sup>12</sup>

Cultural and scientific cooperation has been based on specific bilateral actions with countries such as South Africa, Senegal, Angola, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea and Namibia. Of particular note is the scientific cooperation with South Africa, which has resulted in joint project work agreements between the Spanish Energy, Environmental and Technological Research Centre and the South African Pebble Bed Molecular Reactor for the provision of services and the management of low and medium intensity waste.

In 2006, Casa África, based in La Palmas de Gran Canaria, was established as a public consortium comprising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Government of the Canary Islands, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and the City Council of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Casa África carries out important actions in four areas of action: cultural, academic, social and development cooperation.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid cit. 11.

In addition, two Spanish Cultural Centres have been promoted in Malabo and Bata (Equatorial Guinea) and access to the DELE (Diploma in Spanish as a Foreign Language) has been facilitated through the establishment of sixteen examination centres in Cape Verde, Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania.

Finally, the first Cervantes Institute in sub-Saharan Africa has been set up in Dakar, and Cervantes classrooms have been established in Malabo and Bata.

### **Review of development cooperation balance sheet**

Until recently, Sub-Saharan Africa had not been a region of special interest for Spanish cooperation, which has focused its efforts on Ibero-American countries. Between 1990 and 2004, aid to the sub-Saharan region has been erratic, with no programming of resources. The 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Plan and the subsequent ones try to compensate for this trend in Spanish cooperation.<sup>13</sup> In this way, Spanish Official Development Assistance (ODA) to sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a significant increase between 2006 and 2013 and an important deployment on the ground. Thus, the six existing Technical Cooperation Offices in 2004 (Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Angola, Mozambique and Namibia) have been joined by four new ones in Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Mali and Niger. In addition, permanent cooperation antennae have been established with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Sudan, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa. On the other hand, new countries have been incorporated into the Spanish Cooperation Master Plan (Mali, Niger, Ethiopia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo), bringing the total to fifteen, while bilateral programmes have been launched with other countries such as Gambia, Liberia, Guinea Conakry and Kenya.<sup>14</sup>

In order to assess the increase in development cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa over the last fifteen years, we have drawn up a graph showing the percentage distribution of ODA, by region/continent, corresponding to the Spanish Agency for International

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<sup>13</sup> TEZANOS VÁZQUEZ, S. 'Un plan para el África al sur del Sáhara, Temas para el debate', issue 144, November 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid cit. 11.

Development Cooperation (AECID), the main management body for Spanish cooperation in the fight against poverty.

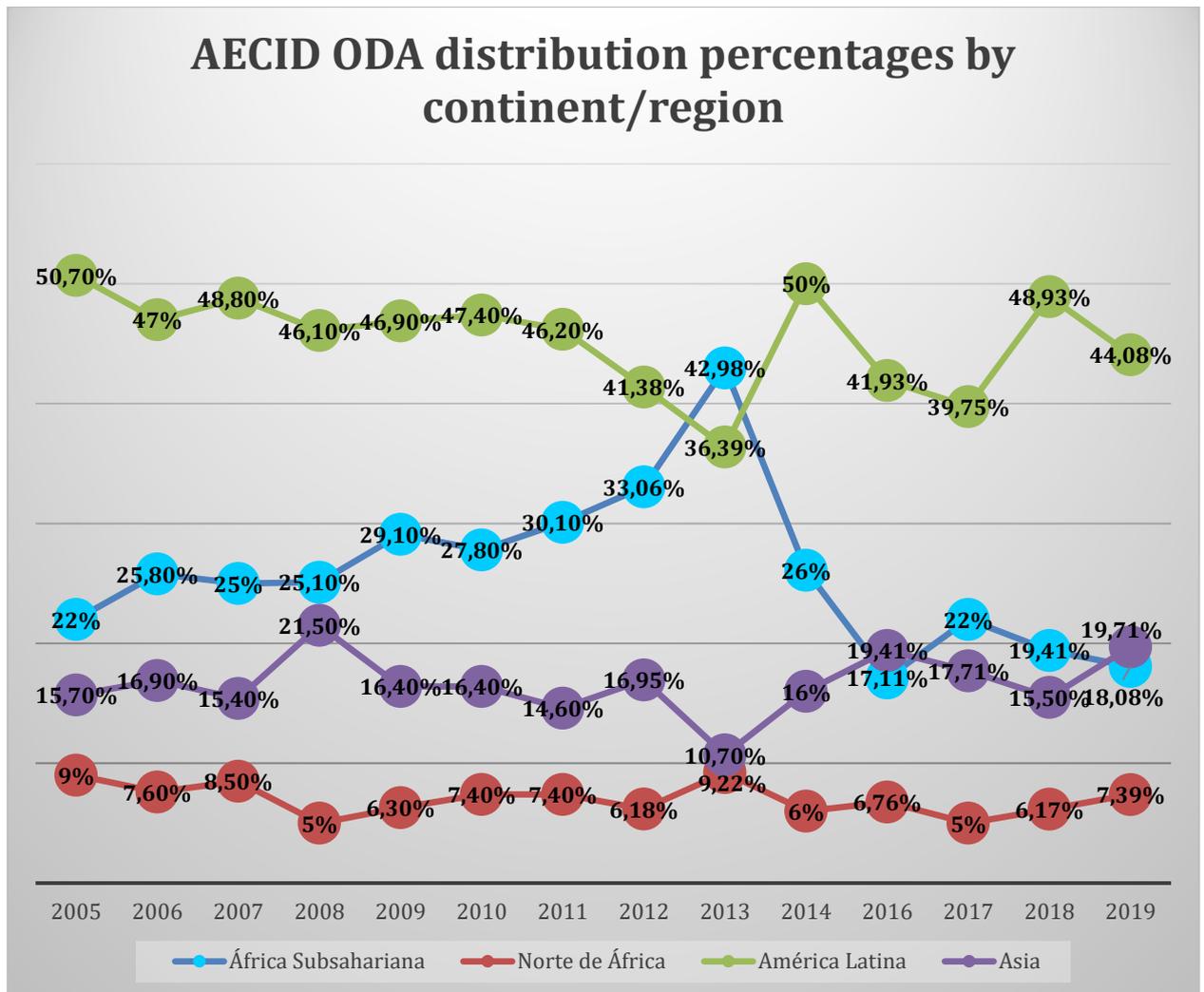


Figure 2: AECID ODA distribution percentages by continent/region. Source: Prepared internally based on data from the AICP (Annual International Cooperation Plan) (not yet published for 2015).

An analysis of the data shows an increase in the percentage of ODA directed to sub-Saharan Africa, which is approaching the figure for Ibero-America, until reaching a turning point in 2013, when the sub-Saharan percentage surpasses that of Ibero-America. Thereafter, the trend is reversed to the point that in 2016 and 2019 the share of ODA going to Asia exceeds that going to sub-Saharan Africa.

If we analyse the documents that establish the objectives and geographic areas for Spanish cooperation, we see that the II Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation (2005-2008)<sup>15</sup>, approved a year before the 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Plan, refers to Ibero-America as the priority area for Spanish cooperation. Sub-Saharan Africa is referred to in third place, after Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb and the Middle East. Within sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Senegal and Cape Verde are designated as priority countries.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation (2009-2012)<sup>16</sup>, when defining the criteria for defining the geographic priorities of Spanish cooperation, explains that it will be oriented towards those countries and regions where the levels of poverty and exclusion are greatest, and in sub-Saharan Africa it points to Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Cape Verde and Niger. Compared to the priority countries of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Master Plan, Mozambique, Senegal and Cape Verde are the same, and the number has been increased from five to six.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation (2013-2016)<sup>17</sup> considers that Spanish Cooperation must make an effort to concentrate geographically and focus on those countries where it can have the greatest impact in relation to its general guidelines. The result is the election of 23 countries, six of which are from sub-Saharan Africa: Mali, Niger, Senegal, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea and Mozambique.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation (2018-2021)<sup>18</sup> includes six 'least developed partner countries' in the region under analysis, and if we compare them with the 4<sup>th</sup> Master Plan, they remain the same except that Equatorial Guinea leaves and Mauritania enters.

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<sup>15</sup><http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/Multimedia/Publicaciones/Documents/Cooperacion/PD/II%20PD%202005-2008.pdf>

<sup>16</sup><http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/Multimedia/Publicaciones/Documents/Cooperacion/PD/III%20PD%202009-2012.pdf>

<sup>17</sup><http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/Multimedia/Publicaciones/Documents/Cooperacion/PD/IV%20PD%202013-2016.pdf>

<sup>18</sup><http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/Multimedia/Publicaciones/Documents/Cooperacion/PD/V%20PD%202018-2021.pdf>

## Review of foreign trade

Sub-Saharan African countries represent a small proportion of Spanish foreign trade: 1.6% of Spanish exports between 2014 and 2018 were destined for this destination and 3.7% of Spanish imports came from this area. Moreover, these overall figures have been showing high year-on-year variability, meaning that in order to appreciate the upward trend it is necessary to analyse the data from a long-term perspective.<sup>19</sup>

Since 2008, the external sector of the Spanish economy has played an increasing role in Spain's economic growth. Between 2008 and 2013, its relevance in cushioning the fall in domestic demand and boosting the subsequent recovery was demonstrated. Since then, the number of exporting companies in Spain and the volume of exports has increased steadily. However, despite this good performance of Spanish sales and investment abroad, there is still limited diversification of destinations.<sup>20</sup>

Africa is a market with enormous potential but is perceived by entrepreneurs and investors as a destination with a high level of legal uncertainty. Thus, Spanish companies have turned more to markets that are close to them (EU partners) or speak the same language (Latin America), where the perceived risk of doing business is low.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the fact that exports have been increasing over the last fifteen years, Spain continues to be a less important trading partner for Africa than neighbouring countries such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom. However, it is fair to point out that Spanish exports to African countries are growing at a faster rate than those of the European countries mentioned.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Exporters and Investors Club and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. 'Inversión empresarial española en África subsahariana', June 2020.  
[https://www.economiadehoy.es/adjuntos/59388/Estudio\\_Inversion\\_Empresarial\\_Espanola\\_en\\_Africa\\_Subahariana\\_03062020.pdf](https://www.economiadehoy.es/adjuntos/59388/Estudio_Inversion_Empresarial_Espanola_en_Africa_Subahariana_03062020.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> MARÍN EGOSCOZÁBAL, A. 'La empresa española en África Subsahariana: estrategias, experiencias y riesgos', Real Instituto Elcano, November 2020.  
<http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/9f10f0e9-01c1-4824-bb36-520915f9ebab/POLICY~1.PDF?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=9f10f0e9-01c1-4824-bb36-520915f9ebab>

<sup>21</sup> El Exportador, 'Acercarse a África', ICEX, issue 139, March 2010.

<sup>22</sup> MARÍN EGOSCOZÁBAL, A. (DIR.), LAFUENTE IBÁÑEZ, C., GARRIDO LLAMAS, P. 'El Plan África y las relaciones comerciales y de inversión entre España y el África Subsahariana en el contexto de los EPA' Fundación Alternativas, Working Paper 36/2009.

One of the characteristics of Spain's foreign trade with the ten countries that are considered priority or preferential in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan is the limited importance of the Spanish economy as a trading partner. Of the ten countries analysed, only in the cases of Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire is Spain the destination of more than 5% of exports. As a supplier of products imported by these countries, the Spanish economy is even smaller, only exceeding 3% in the cases of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.

	Exportaciones		Importaciones	
	Principales países de destino (1)	Cuota	Principales países de origen (1)	Cuota
Etiopía		65,4%		53,6%
	China	16%	China	33%
	Suiza	13%	Francia	12%
	EE. UU.	12%	India	8,6%
	Holanda	11%		
	Alemania	8,4%		
	Reino Unido	5%		
	<b>España</b>	<b>0,71%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>1,2%</b>
Nigeria		51,7%		57,6%
	India	18%	China	28%
	EE. UU.	18%	Bélgica y Luxemburgo	8,9%
	<b>España</b>	<b>9,7%</b>	Holanda	8,3%
	Francia	6%	Corea del Sur	6,4%
			EE. UU.	6%
			<b>España</b>	<b>1,1%</b>

	Exportaciones		Importaciones	
	Principales países de destino (1)	Cuota	Principales países de origen (1)	Cuota
Sudáfrica		44,9%		39,7%
	China	16%	China	19%
	EE. UU	7,6%	Alemania	8,8%
	India	7,4%	EE. UU.	6,7%
	Reino Unido	7,4%	India	5,2%
	Alemania	6,5%		
	<b>España</b>	<b>1,5%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>1,9%</b>
Angola		80,9%		57,5%
	China	61,0%	China	21%
	India	12,0%	Portugal	19%
	EE. UU.	7,9%	Brasil	6,4%
			Sudáfrica	6,1%
			Rep. Congo	5%
	<b>España</b>	<b>3,2%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>2,5%</b>
Costa de Marfil		55,6%		50,4%
	Holanda	15%	China	20%
	EE. UU.	12%	Francia	16%
	Francia	9%	Nigeria	8,1%
	Alemania	7,1%	India	6,3%
	<b>España</b>	<b>7,1%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>3,1%</b>
	Malasia	5,4%		
Ghana		62,7%		36,3%
	India	30%	China	23%
	China	11%	Estados Unidos	8,3%
	Suiza	11%	India	5%
	Sudáfrica	5,4%		
	Holanda	5,3%		
	<b>España</b>	<b>1,0%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>2,0%</b>
Kenia		39,6%		46,6%
	EE. UU.	8,7%	China	23,3%
	Pakistán	8,5%	India	9,8%
	Uganda	8,2%	Emiratos Árabes Unidos	7,4%
	Holanda	7,5%	Arabia Saudí	6,1%
	Reino Unido	6,7%		
	<b>España</b>	<b>0,6%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>0,67%</b>

	Exportaciones		Importaciones	
	Principales países de destino (1)	Cuota	Principales países de origen (1)	Cuota
Mozambique		62,1%		70,4%
	India	34%	Sudáfrica	36%
	Sudáfrica	14%	China	11%
	China	7,5%	India	9,1%
	Italia	6,6%	Australia	7,2%
			Holanda	7,1%
	<b>España</b>	<b>3,7%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>0,55%</b>
Senegal		42,2%		45,6%
	Mali	22%	Francia	25,9%
	India	12%	China	12%
	Suiza	8,2%	India	7,7%
			Nigeria	6,2%
	<b>España</b>	<b>4,3%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>3,8%</b>
Tanzania		51,3%		54%
	India	21%	China	21%
	Sudáfrica	13%	India	15%
	China	6,2%	Emiratos Árabes Unidos	6,9%
	Vietnam	5,9%	Sudáfrica	6%
	Suiza	5,2%	Japón	5,1%
	<b>España</b>	<b>0,55%</b>	<b>España</b>	<b>0,55%</b>

Figure 3: Main trading partners of the Africa Plan countries. The data corresponds to the average for the period 2014-2018. Source: Observatory of Economic Complexity [https://www.economiadehoy.es/adjuntos/59388/Estudio\\_Inversion\\_Empresarial\\_Espanola\\_en\\_Africa\\_Subsahariana\\_03062020.pdf](https://www.economiadehoy.es/adjuntos/59388/Estudio_Inversion_Empresarial_Espanola_en_Africa_Subsahariana_03062020.pdf)

Despite this initial analysis, changes are emerging in Spanish export trends and the African market is becoming increasingly important. Spain's exports of goods to Africa have shown a positive and growing trend over the last 15 years, and a significant number of African countries have doubled their purchases from Spain during this period. In terms of investment, despite its relatively low importance, Spain is the tenth largest investor in

the ranking of projects in Africa. In short, the continent is gradually positioning itself as a relevant market for Spanish business internationalisation.<sup>23</sup>

It is also necessary to highlight that in a strategic sector such as energy, Spain has its main suppliers in Africa. Our country imports 31% of the oil it consumes from the African continent, the main suppliers being Nigeria, followed by Angola; in the case of gas, 60% also comes from Africa, with Algeria—in this case the Maghreb—accounting for almost 50% of the total. Around 600 Spanish companies are established in Sub-Saharan Africa and 1,500 have commercial activity in the region, with a high percentage of SMEs. Nigeria, South Africa, Angola and, to a lesser extent, Equatorial Guinea account for the bulk of trade. South Africa is the only significant investment destination (about half of the total).<sup>24</sup>

With regards to the economic legal framework, Spain has Double Taxation Agreements in force with Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa and is formally considering the negotiation of such an agreement with Ethiopia. In the area of reciprocal promotion and protection of investments (APPRI), the Agreements signed with Equatorial Guinea, Namibia, Nigeria and Senegal are also in force; five other APPRIs signed with countries in the region (Gambia, Yemen, Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Ethiopia) are in the process of being processed or adapted to EU regulations. In the area of trade and foreign direct investment, the agreements signed by the EU with sub-Saharan Africa, in particular the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), are particularly monitored.<sup>25</sup>

When analysing Spain's trade with each of the ten countries that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan considers preferential, as we have already pointed out, the figures show a very significant inter-annual variability without any consolidated trends being discernible in many cases. This is perhaps the consideration that best describes the graphs of exports and imports over the last fifteen years:

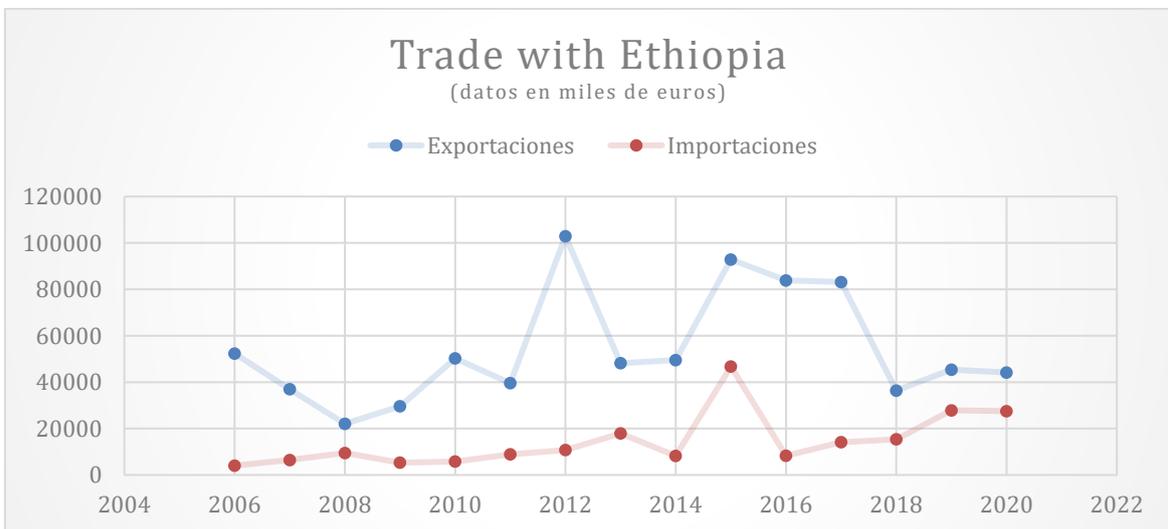
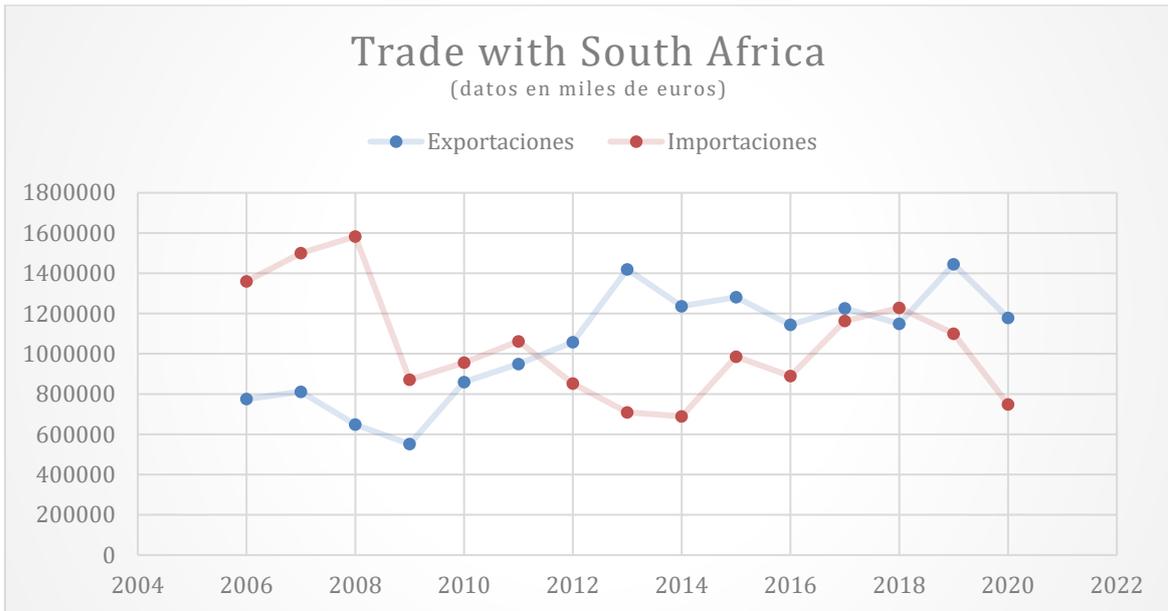
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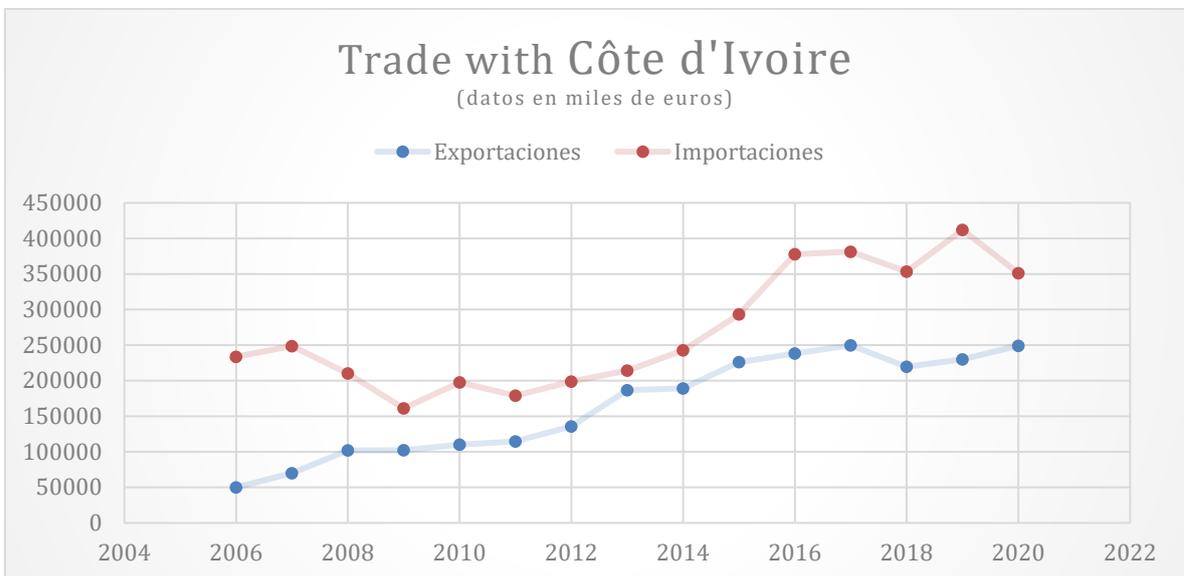
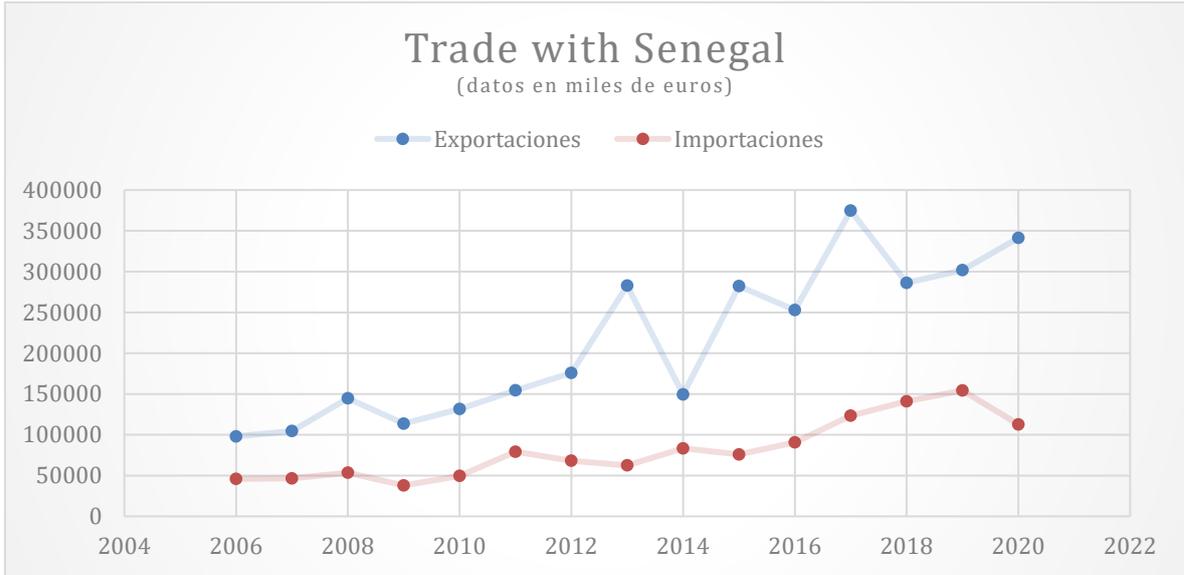
<sup>23</sup> MARÍN EGOSCOZÁBAL, A. 'La empresa española en África Subsahariana: estrategias, experiencias y riesgos', Real Instituto Elcano, November 2020.

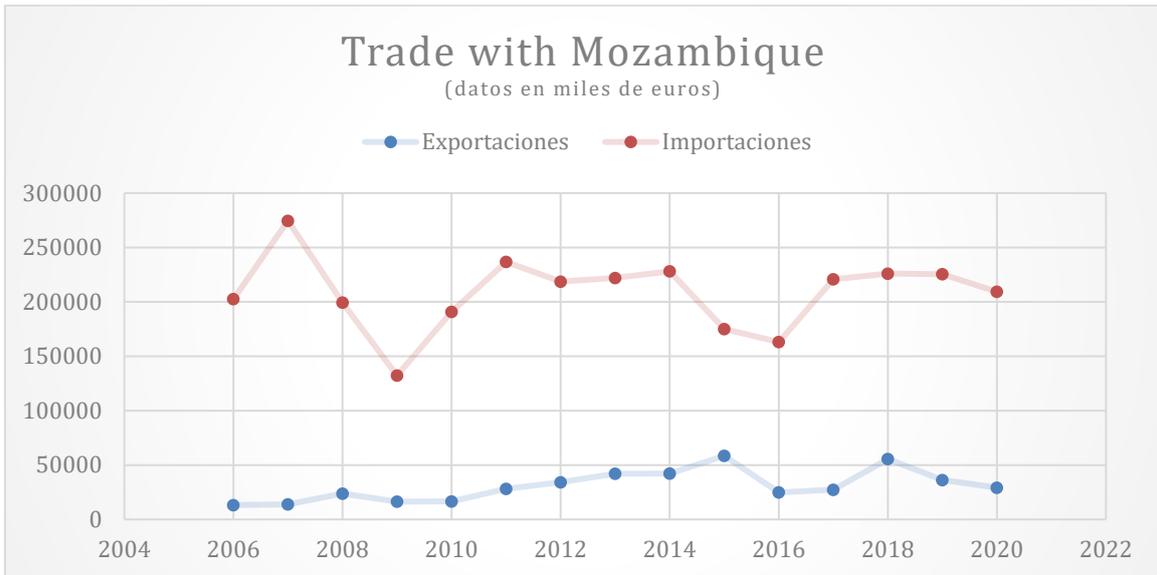
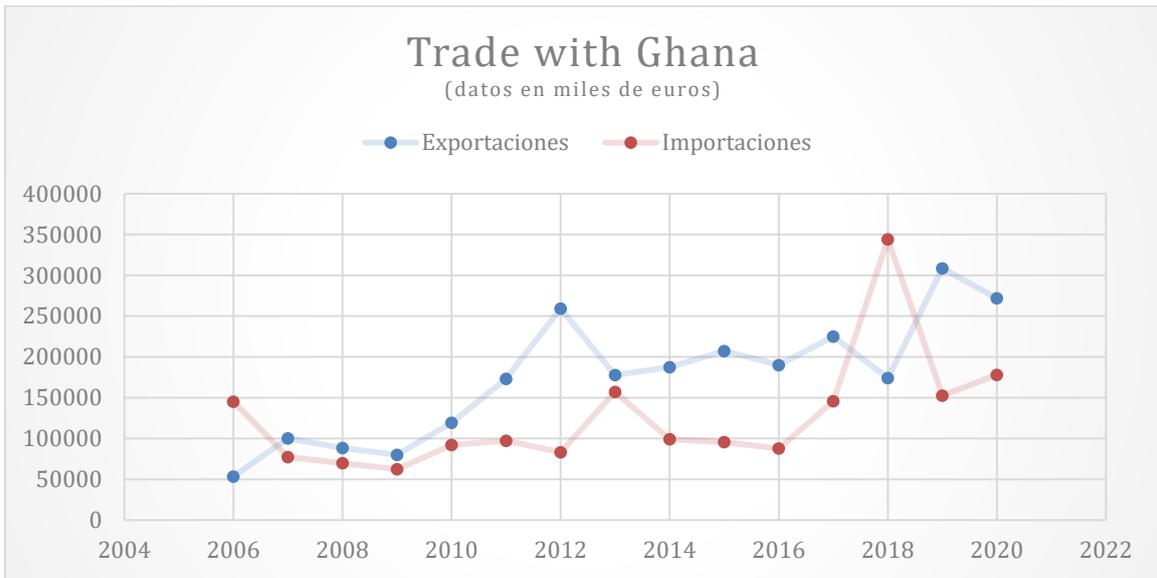
<http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/9f10f0e9-01c1-4824-bb36-520915f9ebab/POLICY~1.PDF?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=9f10f0e9-01c1-4824-bb36-520915f9ebab>

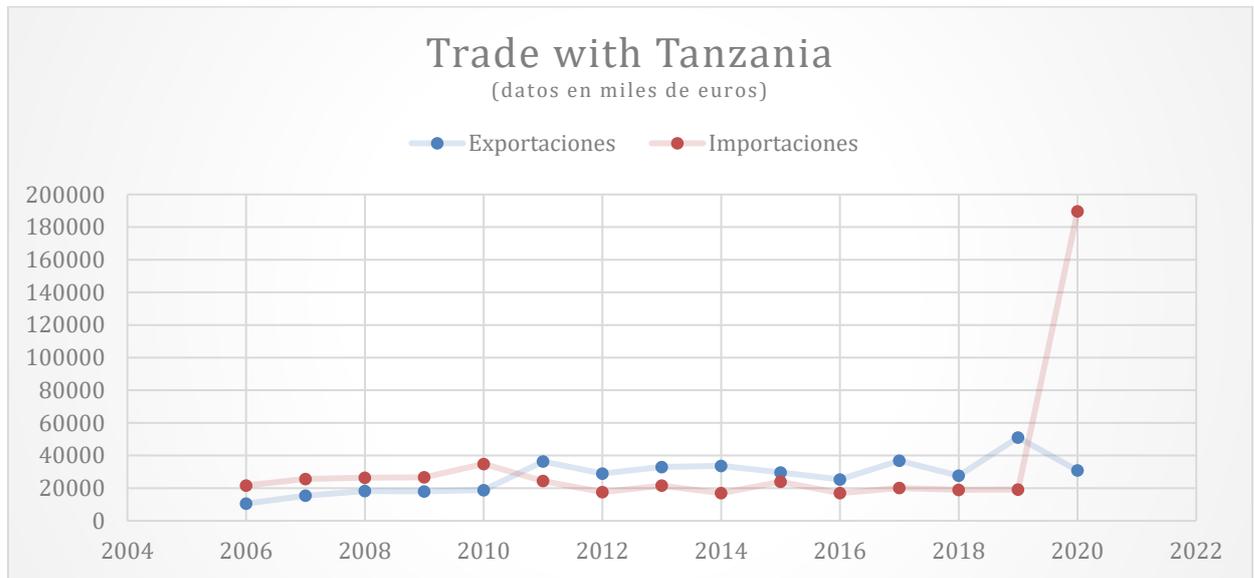
<sup>24</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, 2019

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.









**Figure 4: Trade with the ten countries of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan. Source: Prepared internally based on data published by ICEX.**

However, despite the ups and downs, there is a positive and increasing trend when the analysis is raised from mere year-on-year trends.

As for the main sectors involved in trade with the countries of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Plan, Spanish imports are generally concentrated in oil and oil derivatives, different types of foodstuffs (cocoa, coffee, fruit, sugar, fish and molluscs) and some raw materials (rubber, minerals, copper, aluminium, etc.). Spain's exports to these countries are more diversified and the incorporated value added is higher. For example, 47% of our exports to Ethiopia are tractors; cars and parts account for almost 15% of sales to South Africa; the same percentage is reached by our sales of parts and machinery to Angola; electrical products account for almost 12% of Spanish exports to Kenya, a percentage similar to that of tyres in the case of Mozambique; and vehicles for the transport of goods account for 15% of Spanish sales to Tanzania. <sup>26</sup>

It should also be noted that in July 2020, the Secretary of State for Trade presented a trade and financial strategy for Africa, called Horizon Africa. The aim of this programme

<sup>26</sup> Exporters and Investors Club and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. 'Inversión empresarial española en África subsahariana', June 2020. [https://www.economiadehoy.es/adjuntos/59388/Estudio\\_Inversion\\_Empresarial\\_Espanola\\_en\\_Africa\\_Suhsahariana\\_03062020.pdf](https://www.economiadehoy.es/adjuntos/59388/Estudio_Inversion_Empresarial_Espanola_en_Africa_Suhsahariana_03062020.pdf)

is to support the internationalisation of Spanish companies in the African market and to encourage their growing and solid presence on the continent.<sup>27</sup>

### **Pilot experience with Senegal<sup>28</sup>**

As mentioned above, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plan also envisages the establishment of a strengthened partnership with Senegal to develop the actions and tools envisaged in the document as a pilot experience. The evaluation of this pilot experience will allow the establishment of new and strengthened partnerships with other countries, continuing, in the second instance, with Angola.

Among the measures and initiatives contained in this pilot experience, we can highlight the following:

The opening, in 2021, of the Cervantes Institute in Dakar, the first in a sub-Saharan African country. The aim is to expand the network of institutes to other countries in the region if the experience is successful.

Temporary circular immigration programmes: in the summer of 2019, for the fruit harvesting season in Huesca, a pilot project was launched to hire workers at source, by a private company, in which the conditions of the work contract and the return of the workers to Senegal once the season was over were set. It was the first time that a temporary circular migration programme has been implemented with a country in this region.

A Social Security Agreement signed between Spain and Senegal has been implemented, which allows the totalisation of contribution periods and guarantees the rights acquired by Senegalese workers who wish to return to their country of origin.

Another example of Senegal's specificity in its relations with Spain is the country's participation in the Macaronesia cooperation programme (Madeira, Azores, Canary Islands) financed with ERDF funds. Macaronesia is an example of integration of the

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<sup>27</sup> [https://www.mincotur.gob.es/es-es/actuaciones\\_institucionales/Paginas/estrategia-horizonte-africa.aspx](https://www.mincotur.gob.es/es-es/actuaciones_institucionales/Paginas/estrategia-horizonte-africa.aspx)

<sup>28</sup> The content of this section has been extracted from documents requested by the author, through the transparency portal, from the Directorate General for Africa of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. A document has been provided containing measures included in the pilot experience with Senegal.

outermost regions of Spain and Portugal with Cape Verde, Senegal and Mauritania through jointly identified cross-border measures.

## Conclusions

Despite its geographical position as a bi-continental country, with more than two million citizens living in the Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla, and unlike other neighbouring countries such as France, the United Kingdom and Portugal, Spain, the only European country with part of its national territory in Africa, has not traditionally played a relevant role in the region. However, over the last fifteen years, the attention Spain has placed on sub-Saharan Africa has increased and it has worked with more successes than failures to establish a new relationship and engagement with the continent. Regardless of the initial reasons of a migratory nature, the bottom line is that, through the Africa Plans, Spain has articulated its own foreign policy aimed at this region, with which it has managed to increase and reinforce its presence. There has been a shift from a reactive foreign policy, acting on what is perceived as a threat, to a more ambitious and forward-looking one that considers not only threats but mainly opportunities.

As has been pointed out, the aim is for Spain to become an actor in sub-Saharan Africa with a role as relevant as that played by our country and our companies in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, or for this decade to be Spain's decade in Africa. And for Spanish companies, the cost of not taking positions in African markets—among the most dynamic and with the greatest potential—is high. Spanish society must be prepared to take advantage of all the opportunities that the African continent offers and will offer, and must also assume the ethical commitment to cooperate in the transformation of sub-Saharan Africa in the areas of social welfare, economics, health, education, equality, security and defence.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the increase and strengthening of cooperation between the Spanish Armed Forces and those of African countries. Both the joint work carried out with the aim of improving the security and defence of the countries in the region and the results obtained over the last fifteen years are the clearest example of our country's ethical commitment to the prosperity and stability of sub-Saharan Africa.

Spain should not lose a space that will be occupied by others and that would be difficult to recover in the future.

Óscar Garrido Guijarro

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