

Tajani urges 'real Marshall Plan for Africa' bolstered by 'massive' private sector investment

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News

European Parliament President Antonio Tajani has repeated his call for a "real Marshall Plan for Africa" backed by "massive" private sector investment.



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The Italian MEP was speaking at the European Development Days event in Brussels which concluded on Wednesday.

This year's event, the thirteenth of its kind to be held, focused on addressing inequalities. It attracted over 8,000 people from 140 countries around the world.

Tajani, in a keynote address, told a packed audience, "I have been advocating a real Marshall Plan for Africa backed by massive private sector investment."

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“My proposal is to finance in the next EU budget a €50 billion plan to leverage up to €500 billion in infrastructure, training, access to finance and support for SMEs.”

“Because only major investment can generate sufficient growth and thus the several million jobs capable of absorbing the African population explosion and, ultimately, reducing inequalities,” Tajani said.

The EDD event, a showpiece for the aid community, comes as it was revealed on Wednesday that the number of people forced to flee their homes across the world has exceeded 70 million for the first time since records began.

The UN’s refugee agency warned that about 70.8 million - one in every 108 people worldwide - were displaced in 2018.

This includes people who were forced to flee their homes last year, as well as people who have been unable to return home for years. The figure is a conservative estimate, according to the study’s authors, because the impact of the crisis in Venezuela is still not known.

Matthew Saltmarsh, of the UN refugee agency UNHCR, said, “Year on year the international community is proving unable to make peace.”

“You’ve got a number of regional conflicts, some of which have drawn in international actors. If you look around the world it’s very hard to see resolution to conflicts.”

“Only major investment can generate sufficient growth and thus the several million jobs capable of absorbing the African population explosion and, ultimately, reducing inequalities” **Antonio Tajani**

In his speech, Tajani said the fight against inequality, social exclusion and discrimination are priorities for the European Parliament.

“As a matter of fact, during the legislature that is coming to an end, Parliament has placed a strong emphasis on sustainable and inclusive growth and development. This is coupled with gender equality and an ambitious action plan to reduce the effects of climate change.”

“Whether in Europe or elsewhere, inequalities are a threat to economic and social development. They affect every country in the world. There is even an alarming trend: they are on the rise, between countries but also and especially within countries. This is gradually eroding social cohesion, the glue that binds society.”

"The risk of disillusionment and anger that emanates from this growing inequality leads to instability," Tajani added.

Another speaker, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, told the conference that the European Development Days "are about giving a voice to the whole development community, from world leaders to NGOs, business and industry leaders."

He added, "Addressing inequalities is a necessary step in making our development cooperation more efficient and more meaningful in order not to leave anyone behind."

The Commission used the event to publish a document "reflecting how to better address inequalities through EU development cooperation, notably by making existing development cooperation policies more relevant to addressing inequalities."

The EU also formally signed a €102m agreement with the WHO at the event on Wednesday. The funding will go towards building health care systems in 80 African, Caribbean, Pacific and Asian countries.

Announcing the deal, Mimica said the funding would "give a real boost" to the "ambitious goal of Universal Health Coverage for all by 2030."

Further comment came from Tedros Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, who told the EDD, "This will not only improve health, it also helps reduce poverty and drive economic growth."

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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