



## **ANGEL LOSADA FERNANDES**

*Interview conducted on 23 October 2019*

**Clare Gray:** Hi everyone, we are delighted to be joined by Ambassador Losada, who's the EU's special representative to the Sahel region, and a former Spanish ambassador.

**Angel Losada Fernandes:** Thank you.

**Clare Gray:** I might start by asking you, what steps does the EU need to take to become a more effective global actor? Is it a case of more effective institutions, or better political leadership?

**Angel Losada Fernandes:** I think that the EU is already a global actor. We are of course facing a complicated global situation and we must adapt our leadership, our institutions to this new situation in front of us. The EU is opening delegations all over the world. We have the EEAS – like the MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) of the EU – soon we are going to have a new High Representative. We now have very clear ideas of how we must promote the EU as a global actor in the world. And I think with this process, that the EU is committed now – all around the world – to our principles: Our principles of democracy, our principle of freedom, and of course our principle of helping and contributing to the development of the poorest countries in the world. The EU is the main donor, for instance in Africa. Sometimes some may say that there is a lack of visibility of the EU – perhaps because we don't blow our own trumpet enough, maybe that's the reason. But on the other hand, I think now with this new leadership – which started with Federica Mogherini – gave a big impulse, for instance, to Africa. It is going to be the same with the new High Representative, Borrell, the EU is still becoming - and will be - a stronger institutional actor in the world.

**Clare Gray:** Thank you. And turning then to **EU-Africa relations**, which is of course your area of expertise, these have received a particular focus in the EU's new Strategic Agenda.

**Angel Losada Fernandes:** The EU – as you know – has established this role specifically for the Sahel, which is an important area of insecurity. The security of the Sahel is closely linked to the security of Europe, as is the demographic growth in the region. The EU was the first to establish a strategy for the Sahel in 2011, before even, the events in Mali. This strategy, which has been developed into an action plan is now under further development. This strategy was revolutionary and was based on two principles: **development and**

**security.** You must have development in order to have security, and you must have security in order to have development. And on top of that, the EU also has what we call the global approach: not only political, not only security, but all the different steps in all the different parts of the conflict. With this political approach, we are now able to face all of the big problems which are currently facing Africa. But we must not forget about this strategic approach: today there are, I think, more than 17 strategic approaches to the Sahel, but the EU was the first to establish one in this context.

**Clare Gray:** Now, turning a little bit to the challenges facing the region. Is there any particular challenges you'd like to mention in terms of security or development?

**Angel Losada Fernandes:** Of course, and with the idea of this global approach, we have unfortunately all the crises that you can imagine in the region. There is firstly, a **crisis of governance. Corruption**, of course is a problem. The second one is **security**, where we are unfortunately seeing a problem which is deteriorating quickly. This has the propensity to go far beyond the Sahel, to the south of Africa, to the Gulf of Guinea. This insecurity is new because it is not only based on Jihadism, but it is now also **taking advantage of all traditional confrontations**. Confrontations for example, between herders and farmers, taking advantage of that to create chaos, to create a situation of instability. That is not the only problem: there is also a problem of demography. Countries like Niger can double their population in 18 years, more or less. There is a problem of poverty – the income per person of Niger is \$400 per person, whereas – I heard that – the income per person in Ireland is more than \$40,000. You see the difference – which is simply enormous. Then, another problem of imbalance, which I think is very important, especially when you combine with the problem of demographic progression is the one of climate change. Climate change has a very strong impact. Why? Firstly, **climate change** causes a reduction in the tillable land, with more confrontation between the various groups over land as a result of demographic growth. The EU, with its strategy, takes all of these problems on board – one by one. And there is another one which I think you might be interested in – and that is **migration**, which is a consequence of all these problems. And seeing this as a context, it's really a place where the EU has a special role to play because of our strategy, our way of thinking, and the means that we have. And when I say the EU, I mean the EU and its Member States. For instance, Ireland is giving really good consideration to Africa and the Sahel, and I want to thank Ireland and all they are doing, and for their analysis of the situation, which is very accurate.

**Clare Gray:** Thank you very much for your time Ambassador.

