

State of play of EU-Africa relations

2007/2002(INI) - 25/10/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Maria **MARTENS** (EPP-ED, NL) on the state of play of EU-Africa relations and welcomed the "Outline for the Joint EU-Africa Strategy" as endorsed by the 8th EU-Africa Ministerial Troika Meeting of 15 May 2007 in Brussels. It deplored, however, the fact that the Commission's communication entitled "EU Strategy for Africa: Towards a Euro-African pact to accelerate Africa's development" was adopted without in-depth consultation with the AU institutions and African governments and parliaments, and without any involvement of European and African civil society and local authorities. This strategy dictates the main topics addressed by the proposed new joint strategy, thus running the risk of leaving out other important issues for Africa's sustainable development. Parliament hoped that the new proposed strategy would come forth from in-depth consultation of the AU institutions. Whilst welcoming the Commission's assertion that Parliament had an important role to play in the process, Parliament noted that the timetable for the negotiations was set by the European Commission and the AUC. It expected the Commission and the AUC to take active steps to involve the European Parliament and the PAP in the process of preparing the joint strategy and in its adoption and implementation.

Shared principles and vision: Parliament welcomed the objectives listed in the Troika outline of 15 May 2007: (i) an EU-Africa political partnership, (ii) the continued promotion of peace, security, sustainable development, human rights and regional and continental integration in Africa in order to attain the MDGs, (iii) the common address of global challenges and (iv) a "people-centred partnership". These objectives should faithfully reflect the priorities expressed by Africans. It pointed out that development was nonetheless the main priority objective of the strategy. It called on the Commission to clarify how the new strategy would reflect on the Country Strategy Papers and the National and Regional Indicative Programmes under the Cotonou Agreement. Members went on to point out that humanitarian aid was one of the means available to the international community for helping to protect threatened populations. They emphasised that the EU did not wish to remain unresponsive to violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), and called for an in-depth political debate to be held by the Member States and the EU institutions on the right - if not to say the duty - of intervention in the event of serious violations of IHL and/or human rights. The shared principles and vision should also include respect for the rule of law, as well as participatory democracy, pluralism and fundamental freedoms, all recognised in the Cairo Declaration. Parliament also called on the EU institutions to create a new programmable and predictable financial pan-African envelope from the European Development Fund (EDF), the DCI thematic instruments and the funds of the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI), in order to finance and support the implementation of this new joint strategy.

The four priority areas for action: development and poverty eradication must be a shared commitment and the overarching objective of EU-Africa cooperation. Parliament underlined the central role of the MDGs, and stated that the joint strategy must also emphasise the role of women, young people and civil society organisations in Africa's development processes. The report called on the Commission to ensure coherence between this new strategy and the other European policies which may have an adverse impact on the promotion of a new strategic partnership between the EU and Africa, in particular the commercial, environmental, migration and agricultural policies.

Peace and security: Parliament favoured a comprehensive approach to conflict and conflict situations, based on the concept of the responsibility to protect and including conflict prevention, resolution, management and reconstruction. It called for greater coherence of EU policies, e.g. by implementing its existing commitments to control the arms trade but also by upgrading the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Export to a legally binding CFSP Common Position and by accelerating the implementation of the EU

Strategy to Combat the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). In this connection, Parliament stressed how important it is to prevent rather than to resolve conflicts. It called for international aid to be provided for the purpose of establishing regional monitoring centres on a geographical basis, capable of detecting any deterioration in inter-ethnic, inter-religious or inter-linguistic tensions and of alerting the international community to situations in Africa which may turn violent. The existing EU Code of Conduct on Arms Export also needed to be tightened so as to counteract the proliferation of SALW, which perpetuated the murderous conflicts in many developing countries. Parliament considered that the joint strategy would enhance the fight against weapons trafficking.

Governance: Parliament recalled that the concept of governance, and the indicators used to assess it, could not be imposed by external actors, but should be developed in partnership with local actors and based on common values and internationally recognised standards. It reiterated its support for the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly's (JPA) request, that a suitable proportion of EDF appropriations should be used for the political education and training of parliamentarians and leaders, in the interests of a sustainable strengthening of good governance, the rule of law, democratic structures, and the interaction between government and opposition in pluralistic democracies based on free elections. Whilst strengthening governance in African countries was a priority, Parliament noted that governance must be improved on both sides – on the European side in particular, the governance and accountability as regards aid commitments and better donor coordination with a view to taking greater account of the so-called 'aid orphans'. It expressed serious concern that the "governance profiles" developed by the Commission for each ACP country, which will guide programming for development assistance in relation to the EUR 2,700,000,000 additional funds under the 10th EDF, have been prepared without any participatory element. It urged the European Commission and the AUC to use the AU support programme in order to facilitate access for African parliaments, local authorities and non-state actors to the political dialogue taking place in the AU, and to earmark part of the EUR 55,000,000 specifically for strengthening the PAP.

Economic growth, trade and regional integration: the report stressed that development assistance was a necessary but insufficient condition for combating poverty and that only equitable and sustainable economic growth could allow a country to start climbing the development ladder, on condition that growth was combined with the right domestic and international social and environmental policies. It deplored the fact that - while poverty reduction and the attainment of the MDGs by 2015 rightly remain the first priority - the Troika Outline lacked concrete proposals to promote growth through the promotion of SMEs and foreign direct investment, strengthened property rights, and the reduction of administrative burdens. The EU must ensure that lending organisations, such as the European Investment Bank and the Centre for the Development of Enterprise, assist SMEs in Africa. More attention should be paid to the informal sector, and that the practice of microfinance should be extended.

With regard to **Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)**, Parliament felt that these must be negotiated as development agreements as much as trade agreements, which meant that they must be based on the principles of asymmetry in favour of the ACP regions, support for ACP regional integration, the establishment of a reliable framework for the promotion of trade and investment in the ACP regions, and the establishment of regional markets prior to any opening up of markets to the EU. It therefore called on the Commission, whenever necessary, to **refrain from opening up markets** until specific levels of development had been attained and to find solutions while continuing negotiations. The EPAs could become an important tool for African trade and regional integration, provided that their substance fully accorded with development policy objectives, and only on condition that they were "development-friendly", allowing for exemptions and long transition periods where needed in order for domestic producers and industries to adapt to new market situations.

Parliament insisted that regional economic communities (RECs) should be the pillars of the African integration process and the establishment of a pan-African market, and should not only be dealing directly with Europe. EPAs should not undermine Africa's own regional integration agenda, but should also be instruments for South-South integration and trade.

Investing in people: Parliament insisted that the joint strategy should contribute to gender mainstreaming and to the implementation of concrete actions aimed at the empowerment of women. It stressed that health was one of the most important drivers of economic development and that child mortality rates in particular are a powerful indicator of poverty. The current international commitments to education and health for all needed to be expressly integrated in the joint strategy. 63% of all people in the world infected with HIV live in Africa, and in a number of African countries average life expectancy is falling dramatically as a result of the AIDS pandemic. Universal access to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria services in Africa should be included in the joint strategy. Parliament again stressed that women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and pregnancy-related complications resulting in high maternal and neonatal mortality.

It moved on to emphasise that EU policies, including subsidy policy, must not harm Africa's agricultural sector or jeopardise food security. The EU was urged to offer financial support to the 'Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Programme', adopted by the AU and NEPAD. Parliament also underlined in relation to the worrying and worsening phenomenon of desertification, the need to support sustainable agricultural methods. The issue of desertification and access to water for all should be of the utmost importance in the joint strategy. Since Africa is the continent predicted to suffer the effects of climate change most severely, Parliament urged the EU, the AU and their Member States, as well as investors and business actors, to acknowledge their responsibility for climate change, and called on them to develop an environment friendly development strategy in order to reverse the situation, including a financial framework for environmental adaptation. The EU must make significant funding available for adaptation measures in African countries. Risk reduction and "climate proofing" measures must be integrated into the overarching development agenda. The joint strategy should also address the root causes of migration and pay particular attention to the rights and the integration of migrants and to the issue of brain drain, particularly in the health sector, by proposing practical solutions to successful circular migration. Parliament went on to acknowledge the usefulness and the relevance of budget support, but called for caution in relation to the disbursement of aid in the form of budget support. Budget support must be treated separately for each country, depending on its particular situation.

Implementation and monitoring: Parliament called on the Commission and the general secretariat of the Council to send all further progress reports on the implementation of the EU strategy for Africa to the European Parliament. It also requested information on the disbursement and implementation of the EUR 2.7 billion additional funds under the 10th EDF allocated to the "governance initiatives" developed by the Commission for each ACP country, as well as on how the 9th EDF has been used and reprogrammed. The Commission is asked to propose a joint mechanism for the implementation and evaluation of the new joint strategy, both on a technical and political basis, including all the EC financial instruments for development at all stages. The report calls on the Commission to ensure that any monitoring framework includes the monitoring of existing commitments by the AU and EU, such as the MDGs, the Cotonou Agreement, the Abuja Call for Action, and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The joint strategy should explicitly include a communications strategy, in order to raise public awareness on what governments are doing and to provide the feedback loop in order to ensure that governments are in touch with the needs of their constituents on these policies.

The Commission is asked to indicate how it will finance the new strategy and its programme of action, and to inform the European Parliament and the PAP at all stages of the process (programming, identification, appraisal, financing, implementation and evaluation).

Lastly, Parliament called for the first action plan to include a specific financial envelope for pan-African institutions, activities to be implemented at pan African level, and the new partnerships (Lisbon initiatives). National, regional and continent-wide parliaments must be expressly considered as beneficiaries of aid.