Resolution on the EU response to situations of fragility in developing countries

2007/2662(RSP) - 15/11/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution in response to the Commission Communication entitled "Towards an EU response to situations of fragility – engaging in difficult environments for sustainable development, stability and peace", and welcomed the preparation of an EU response to fragility and stresses the need to involve parliaments in all phases of this strategy. It pointed out that, since the 1990s, states that lack the capacity to fulfil their "traditional" functions and to drive development forward, and whose institutions are weak, have been classed "fragile states" by the World Bank (WB) and the international development community. Despite the fact that there was no unambiguous working definition of the concept, it was possible to identify states undergoing situations of fragility, and the number of states judged by the WB to be "fragile" almost doubled from 14 to 26 between 2000 and 2006, of which 14 are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Parliament considered that fragility was a complex development challenge and stressed the need for a well-defined and coherent fragility agenda based on the principle of "doing no harm", i.e. adapted to the situation, taking long-term considerations into account and coordinating the multiple aims and approaches of the different stakeholders in light of the main and overarching objective of reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

A stable and democratic political system, which was conducive to development, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, good governance and peaceful conflict prevention, was the best way to end situations of fragility and to move towards functioning open institutions and efficient and equitable policy-making. The main components of the fragility agenda should be three-fold, with an emphasis on poverty and prevention: promoting the security of people, improving development, and ensuring peace. Long-term strategic planning needed to be coordinated with the implementation of programmes on the ground that need to be responsive to the situation in the country in question. Parliament called on the Commission, therefore, to promote long-term development, and also to provide basic services such as health and education in the short term. Development programmes in fragility situations should observe the same underlying principles as development programming in any situation, that is, ownership, partnership, mutual accountability and sustainability. A comprehensive model on fragility and development needed to take into account existing local, regional and continental initiatives such as the recent AU Policy Framework on PCRD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Mechanism and the Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in Africa. Parliament called on the Commission, therefore, to support efforts to strengthen South-South cooperation in this field.

It called on the Commission to do the following ;

- to support all-inclusive peace and political dialogue and reconciliation processes, and to enhance the participation of communities and civil society in all aspects of the recovery cycle and the development strategies. Sustainable peace could only be achieved if justice is done, and seen to be done, in particular with regard to war crimes and crimes against humanity ;

- to support the strengthening of the legal and judicial systems of fragile states in order to ensure that perpetrators of serious crimes against humanity were brought to justice ;

- to support efforts made in developing countries to diversify their agricultural production so as to allow them to get out of situations of highly vulnerable single-crop economies and thus avoid fragile situations resulting from economic collapse;

- to ensure not only that domestic stakeholders are fully involved in the efforts to overcome situations of fragility, but also that their own notion and definition of state-building and their state model is considered and that local expertise is used;

- to promote the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups by taking into account their specific needs and situation in fragility environments;

- to ensure that significant financial and human resources as well as long-term commitments are made available in a sufficient, adequate and predictable way and that there is coherence between donor agencies;

- since the use of budget support is not appropriate in fragility situations, where audit and monitoring capacities are weak or non-existent, to use other forms of funding in such situations, unless it can provide detailed information on how the money is being spent;

- to provide Parliament with a mapping of donors and international actors and the type of work they are doing, in order to allow monitoring, as well as the optimal use, of available tools and resources.
Parliament pointed out that the existence of multiple funding instruments leads to the risk of duplication or of poor resource allocation, and makes accountability and participation more difficult for societies that are already weakened.