

Activities of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2007

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The Committee on Development adopted the own initiative report by Alain **HUTCHINSON** (PES, BE) on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), welcoming the fact that, in 2007, the JPA provided a framework for an open, democratic and in-depth dialogue on the **negotiation of EPAs** between the European Union and the ACP countries, while stressing the concerns expressed by the JPA over several aspects of the negotiations, with regard to both form and substance.

MEPs welcome the commitment made by the Commissioner responsible for development during the JPA session in Kigali to subject Country and Regional Strategy Papers for the ACP countries (period 2008-2013) to democratic scrutiny by parliaments. They recall, in this regard, the need to closely involve parliaments in the democratic process and in the national development strategies and their vital role in establishing, following up and monitoring development policies. MEPs Calls on the parliaments of the ACP countries to demand that their governments and the Commission involve them in the process relating to the preparation and implementation of the Country Strategy Papers. The Commission is called upon to supply all available information to the parliaments of the ACP countries and to provide them with assistance in this work of democratic control, in particular by supporting their capacities.

MEPs reaffirm that they support the JPA's request, as expressed in previous years, for a suitable percentage of EDF appropriations to be assigned to education and to the political training of parliamentarians and political, economic and social leaders, in the interest of good governance, the rule of law and the rise of democracy in the country. MEPs also, once again, call on the ACP countries to **exercise their parliamentary scrutiny** in respect of the European Development Fund (EDF), while the Commission is, again, called upon to fill the funding gap between the implementation of EDF 9 and EDF 10.

In terms of **the impact of the JPA**, MEPs consider that it plays a positive role in political dialogue and in the quest for a global agreement for peace in Darfur. They call on the JPA to contribute to the international community's awareness-raising effort with regard to the conflicts affecting North Kivu and several regions in the east of the DRC. At the same time, they call on the JPA to pursue dialogue with the Pan-African Parliament and parliaments of regional organisations on all issues related to conflict prevention. They regret therefore that, having debated the issue of Somalia during the JPA session in Kigali, the situation in Somalia has not improved, and continues to be a 'forgotten crisis'.

At organisational level, MEPs encourage the JPA to strengthen the role of its Committee on Political Affairs in order to make it a true forum for conflict prevention and settlement in the context of the ACP-EU partnership, and, to that end, to make the debates on urgent situations more general. While they welcome the work done in the area of good governance, as well as in the monitoring of elections, MEPs urge greater attention to be paid to the issue of food security, especially at a time when the World Food Programme is sounding the alarm due to the rise in prices and the decline in world food stocks.

Lastly, MEPs highlight the importance of the effectiveness of aid and urge the JPA to hold an in-depth debate on the concept of official development aid, budgeting issues and forms of alternative funding in

development cooperation. They also note with satisfaction the growing participation of non-governmental stakeholders in JPA sessions and call on the JPA, the EU and ACP countries to encourage, from a financial and technical point of view, the participation of the civil society of ACP countries in this work.