Special place for children in EU external action

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The Committee on Development adopted an own-initiative report drafted by Glenys **KINNOCK** (PES, UK) on a special place for children in EU external action in response to the Commission Communication on the subject. The committee welcomed the Communication and the four guiding principles of the Commission's Action Plan on Children's Rights in External Action which include a holistic and coherent child rights-based approach.

It noted that every day, more than 26 000 children under the age of 5 die around the world, mostly from preventable causes. On current trends, the MDG goal to reduce child deaths by two thirds will not be reached until 2045. Members highlight the importance of meeting the MDGs on efforts to safeguard children's rights, and urge Member States to fulfil their pledges to provide adequate, predictable funding through timetabled budgetary aid designed to meet the 2010 benchmarks.

Members go on to make a series of recommendations, highlighting the need to pursue the elimination of all forms of discrimination against girls, and to pay special attention to the most vulnerable and socially excluded girls and boys, including disabled children, migrant children, children from minorities, separated or unaccompanied children and children without parental care. The EU is urged to prioritise the right to education, especially for girl children, in aid programmes and policy dialogue with partner countries.

The main points are as follows:

- in order to put the child rights-based approach into practice, the EU must undertake a thorough analysis of children's rights, ideally when Country, Regional and Thematic Strategy Papers are adopted or reviewed, on the basis of which actions and programmes targeting children's issues can be selected. The committee calls on the Commission to provide to Parliament, as early as possible or during mid-term reviews of development programmes, an overview of child-related actions and financial allocations;
- it supports building up existing youth and children's networks as sustainable platforms for consulting children, and calls on the Commission systematically to invite these networks to contribute towards the discussions on Country Strategy Papers, as well as to encourage their involvement in the development of national planning instruments;
- the Commission is asked to draw up a report examining whether the existing international agreements between the EU and third countries already contain a legally binding clause on the protection of children's rights and, if not, whether such a clause could be inserted into agreements;
- it is also called upon to help partner countries adopt child-friendly budgeting, especially when the EC is providing budget support, and to develop integrated, comprehensive National Action Plans for Children with clear benchmarks, measurable targets, timelines and review and reporting mechanisms on children's rights;
- in order to ensure visibility and leadership on children's rights, an EU Special Representative should be appointed;
- responsibility for children's issues should be given to an individual in each Commission Delegation, and the committee calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that all staff in Headquarters and Missions/Delegations are properly trained and supplied with guidance notes on how to integrate children's rights into external actions, and manage safe and effective child participation;

Lastly, Members want all EU policies with a likely effect on children in third countries to be subject to consistent child rights impact assessments prior to their adoption, as well as subsequent evaluations. They

underlines that children should be considered as a separate and distinct group as they are not affected in the same way as adults.