# Work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2008

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The Committee on Development adopted the own-initiative report by Thierry CORNILLET (ALDE, FR) on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2008. It welcomes the fact that in 2008 the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) continued to provide a framework for an open, democratic and in-depth dialogue on the negotiation of **Economic Partnership Agreements** (EPAs) between the EU and the ACP countries. The JPA voiced concerns about several formal and substantive aspects of the negotiations, and Members point out that the debate is still in progress following the adoption of the EPA with the Cariforum and of interim agreements with certain countries in other regions.

They underline the need for close parliamentary scrutiny during the negotiation as well as during the implementation of EPAs. The report criticises the fact that the work and role of the JPA is threatened by the prospect of the creation of a new body in the context of EPAs – namely the **parliamentary committee** – without the relationship between that body and the JPA being made clear. The parliamentary committee should operate as part of the JPA, to avoid a costly and complicated proliferation of meetings, taking advantage of the JPA's system of regional meetings, and exploiting the experience of the JPA. This committee should operate in a flexible manner, enabling it to draw on the expertise on both trade and development issues of the Members of the European Parliament involved in the examination of the EPA in committee.

Members stress in particular the crucial role of the **ACP national parliaments**, non-state actors and local authorities in monitoring and managing EPAs, and call on the Commission to guarantee their involvement in the negotiation process. They welcome the Assembly's adoption of the Port Moresby Declaration adopted by the JPA on 28 November 2008 on the global food and financial crises. The JPA should hold regular debates on this issue.

The committee welcomes the undertaking given by the Commissioner with responsibility for development to subject **Country and Regional Strategy Papers** for the ACP countries (2008-2013) to democratic scrutiny by parliaments. It calls on the parliaments of the ACP countries to insist that their governments and the Commission involve them in the process of drafting and implementing the Country and Regional Strategy Papers. The Commission must supply all available information to the parliaments of the ACP countries and assist them in exercising democratic scrutiny, in particular by means of capacity-building.

Turning to the **European Development Fund** (EDF), the committee states that it is in favour of incorporating the latter into the EU budget, calling on parliaments to exercise close parliamentary scrutiny of the EDF. Highlighting the JPA's key position in this debate, the committee calls on it and the parliaments of the ACP countries to take an active part in the **revision of the Cotonou Agreement** scheduled for 2010. It insists that the JPA be involved in the whole process of negotiating that revision.

Moving on to individual states, the committee calls on the JPA to continue to address the situation in Sudan, and in particular in Darfur, namely by assessing the position of the Union and ACP countries regarding the ICC indictments. The JPA should continue to address the situation in Somalia, which is endangering the lives of the Somali people, and it must continue to discuss the alarming situation in Zimbabwe, and raise awareness of the conflicts affecting the eastern DRC, promoting a negotiated political situation to the crisis.

The JPA is asked to **deepen dialogue with the Pan-African Parliament** (PAP) and the parliaments of regional organisations, in view of the importance of regional integration to peace and development in ACP countries. The committee deplores the fact that the JPA was not properly consulted during the **drafting of the Joint EU-Africa Strategy** and hopes that the Assembly will be actively involved in the implementation of that strategy.

The report welcomes the JPA Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment report on the social and environmental consequences of structural adjustment programmes – adopted in Ljubljana – which advocates that the practice of making World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) lending subject to economic policy conditions has had **disastrous social and environmental consequences** for ACP countries, and should be replaced by a country-specific lending policy that focuses on reducing poverty.

Lastly, the committee calls for joint discussions to be held between the secretariats of the ACP countries and of the European Parliament on the way the JPA works, with particular regard to voting by separate Houses, equality of treatment of parliamentarians, and joint fact-finding and election observation missions.