Work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2008

2008/2303(INI) - 24/03/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 619 votes to 20, with 18 abstentions, a resolution on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2008.

MEPs welcome 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. They draw attention to the concerns voiced by the JPA about several formal and substantive aspects of the negotiations.

Need for parliamentary scrutiny: the resolution stresses the need for close parliamentary scrutiny during the negotiation as well as during the implementation of EPAs. MEPs criticise 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 is called upon to 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 to exploit the experience of the JPA and promote synergy between all the EPA regions. 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.

The Parliament welcomes the undertaking given by the Commissioner with responsibility for development and humanitarian aid to subject Country and Regional **Strategy Papers** for the ACP countries (2008-2013) to democratic scrutiny by parliaments. It recalls, in this regard, the need to **closely involve parliaments in the democratic process** and in the national development strategies.

The resolution also calls on the JPA to pursue and 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. In this context, MEPs deplore the fact that the JPA was not properly consulted during the drafting of the Joint EU-Africa Strategy and hope that the Assembly will be actively involved in the implementation of that strategy.

Lastly, MEPs stress the **crucial role of the ACP national parliaments**, non-state actors and local authorities in monitoring and managing EPAs. They call on the Commission to guarantee their involvement in the ongoing negotiation process, which requires a clear agenda for further negotiations, to be agreed by the ACP countries and the Union and based on a participatory approach.

Better use of funds: in relation to the European Development Fund (EDF), MEPs are in favour of **incorporating the EDF into the EU budge**t and call on parliaments to exercise close parliamentary scrutiny of the EDF. Highlighting the JPA's key position in this debate, MEPs call on it and the parliaments of the ACP countries to take an active part therein, in particular in connection with the revision of the Cotonou Agreement scheduled for 2010.

MEPs also welcome 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.

Addressing the situation in certain States: the JPA is called upon to continue to address the situation in Sudan, and in particular in Darfur, to address the situation in Somalia, to continue to discuss the alarming situation in Zimbabwe and to continue to contribute to the international community's efforts to raise awareness of the conflicts affecting the eastern DRC.

The way the JPA works: lastly, the Parliament calls, in addition to the annual report on the activities of the ACP-EU JPA, 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.