Work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2011

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the work of the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of states-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly (ACP-EU JPA) in 2011.

Parliament recalls that the ACP-EU JPA is the largest parliamentary body encompassing countries of both the North and the South. It also recalls that, in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, the political dialogue is among the key objectives of the JPA. In this sense, it welcomes the JPA regional meeting held in Cameroon in 2011, which resulted in the adoption of the Yaoundé Communiqué on the proliferation of sexual violence.

It also recalls that the revision of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in 2010 provided a valuable opportunity to **strengthen the role of the JPA and its regional dimension** and to develop parliamentary scrutiny in ACP regions and countries.

Parliament demands that the JPA be kept updated on the state of play of the ratification of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, as revised in Ouagadougou on 22 June 2010.

An open and in-depth dialogue: Parliament welcomes the fact that in 2011 the JPA continued to provide a framework for an open, democratic and in-depth dialogue between the European Union and the ACP countries on the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and its implementation, including the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

It stresses **the need to pay more attention to the outcomes of the work of the ACP-EU JPA an dits regional dimension**, and to ensure coherence between its resolutions and those of the European Parliament. It is concerned over the fall in the participation of MEPs, in particular at JPA Committee meetings, and asks for greater involvement of MEPs in its meetings and activities.

Democratic scrutiny and impact of national parliaments: recalling that the High Representative/Vice President has given assurances that the EU Council should be represented at ministerial level at the sessions of the Assembly, Parliament calls for a clearer delineation of responsibilities between the EEAS and the Commission in terms of the implementation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. It stresses the **crucial role of the ACP national parliaments**, local authorities and non-state actors in the drafting and monitoring of the Country and Regional Strategy Papers and the implementation of the European Development Fund (EDF). It calls on the Commission and the ACP governments to guarantee their involvement and further emphasises the need for close parliamentary scrutiny during the negotiation and conclusion of EPAs.

Parliament draws attention to the need to involve parliaments in the democratic process and in the national development strategies. It stresses their vital role in establishing, following up and monitoring development policies. In this context, the Commission is called on to supply all available information to the parliaments of the ACP countries and to assist them in exercising democratic scrutiny.

Budget cuts: Parliament expresses concern over budget cuts in EU Member States affecting development policy spending. It calls on the JPA to maintain its pressure on EU Member States to meet their 0.7 % GNI target by 2015. Better targeting of resources where they are most needed is necessary to **reduce poverty**.

At the same time, Parliament calls on the JPA to continue its discussions on the organisational costs of its meetings. It underlines the new rules, adopted by Parliament, governing travel by **parliamentary assistants** have rendered it impossible for them to assist Members on mission. It calls for greater flexibility in the admission of parliamentary assistants attending meetings of the JPA in order to enhance the quality of work of their members.

Human Rights: Parliament reiterates the importance of an enhanced, genuine and more comprehensive political dialogue on human rights, including non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. In this regard, it is concerned at the **increase in violence and discrimination against homosexuals in some countries**, and calls on the JPA to put this on the agenda for its debates. Parliament calls on the JPA to continue to monitor the situation in North Africa and in ACP countries in crisis, and to play closer attention to situations of state fragility. It also calls on the JPA to continue to organise its own election observation missions on the same basis as the successful mission to Burundi in 2010.

Role of women: Parliament calls on the EU and the ACP countries to encourage citizens, and particularly women, to participate in development issues, since the involvement of society is vital if progress is to be made. It acknowledges the problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills of women, and urges the Commission and the JPA to include more women in the Assembly's task forces and working groups.

Lastly, Parliament welcomes the fact that holding these meetings make for a genuine exchange of views on regional issues, including conflict prevention and resolution, regional cohesion and EPA negotiations (as in the case of the meeting held in Cameroon). It draws attention to the fact that the discussion about the **post 2020-future of the ACP group** has already begun, and stresses the need to clarify the future roles and relations of the different groups (ACP, AU, LDCs, G-77, regional groupings).