Local authorities and civil society: Europe's engagement in support of sustainable development

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The Committee on Development adopted the own-initiative report by Corina CREU (S&D, RO) on local authorities and civil society: Europe's engagement in support of sustainable development.

The report welcomed the recent policy developments at EU and international level which are focused on a more ambitious **partnership with civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities (LAs)**, founded:

- on a human rights based approach to development, including economic, social and cultural rights as well as international treaties on environment and biodiversity protection,
- and on the clear commitment to strengthening the democratic process and accountability.

Members considered that democratic ownership includes not only governments but also CSOs, LAs and national parliaments, which play crucial roles in linking citizens with government and in ensuring broad-based and democratic ownership of countries' development agendas.

With a view to creating a **favourable environment for civil society organisation and local authorities**, the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) are invited to:

- develop guidance and implementation plans to promote EU development cooperation in dialogue with CSOs and to further the implementation of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders;
- mainstream the promotion of an enabling environment for CSOs and LAs and to consider this a priority for the EU's position in the ongoing negotiations on the post-2015 development framework.

The report encouraged the EU to **promote institutionalised mechanisms** for multilevel and multiple stakeholder dialogue and recommended that for each partner country the EU applies the provisions on consultations with LAs provided for in the Cotonou Agreement for ACP states.

Development effectiveness: Members called on the Commission and the EEAS to:

- allocate **adequate resources** in the future programming period, to allow CSOs and LAs from partner countries to monitor and analyse progress towards PCD at local, national and international level;
- promote a **'partnership for accountability'** for strategic cooperation between elected representatives at national and local level and CSOs;
- support the inclusion of LA representatives in the **Steering Committee of the Global Partnership** for Effective Development Cooperation.
- establish **country RMs for LAs** as well, and to consider the development of joint CSO and LA country RMs;
- **adopt the sustainable development agenda**, taking account of the fact that its three core components (environmental, social and economic) are equally important and inseparable parameters.

The Union is invited to:

- make efficient use of **knowledge-sharing** and capacity-development methods, including the use of the transition experience of LAs in EU Member States;
- adopt a **scaled-up agenda** with a view to achieving a proportional increase in the effective experiences of projects and initiatives of both CSOs and Las financed by the EU.

Decentralisation and territorial approach to development (TAD): the report called on the Commission and the EEAS to establish a more ambitious policy dialogue with and within partner countries to promote TAD and a comprehensive approach to decentralisation. It stressed the importance of **strengthening EU staff expertise and commitment**, in particular at delegation level.

Education: recalling Parliament's written declaration on 'development education and active global citizenship', Members called on the Commission to:

- develop an **overarching development education and awareness raising (DEAR) strategy**;
- increase the financial resources which will be allocated in the future programming period to DEAR.

Programming documents and aid modalities: the report welcomed the Commission's engagement to systematically introduce political economy analysis at country level and recommends that this should include an analysis of the political and legal situation of CSOs and LAs.

The Commission is invited to:

- improve the coordination and complementarity between thematic and geographic programmes and instruments;
- encourage a wider participation of LAs in all DCI programmes;
- support decentralised cooperation and partnerships between LAs from EU and partner countries;
- facilitate experience- and expertise-sharing between Las from EU and partner countries;
- engage in more strategic partnerships with national, regional, and international associations and networks of LAs.

Lastly, the report encouraged LA partnerships in **fragile states** to provide for the development, transfer and exchange of administrative and technical skills.