EU approach to resilience and disaster risk reduction in developing countries: learning from food security crises

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU approach to resilience and disaster risk reduction in developing countries: "learning from food security crises", in response to the Commission communication on the same topic.

Parliament noted that, according to the UN, since 1992 4.4 billion people have been affected by disasters, USD 2 trillion worth of damage has been caused and 1.3 million people have been killed. In 2011, the cost of disaster loss was over USD 300 billion.

The UN further predicts that the world's urban population will increase by **72% by 2050**, and that most urban growth will occur in less developed countries, thereby greatly increasing the number of people exposed to disaster risk.

In this context, Parliament welcomed both the Commission's 2012 Resilience Communication and its objectives, as well as the document entitled "Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis-Prone Countries 2013-2020" and its priorities. It called on the Commission together with the European External Action Service (EEAS), to implement its proposals and priorities and to ensure that consistent progress is made on achieving its objectives.

EU approach to resilience: Parliament called on the Commission to actively integrate resilience measures into both the humanitarian and the development sides of programming. It stressed that there needs to be a stronger link between short-term humanitarian responses and longer-term development programming and that this should fit into the overall resilience approach.

For the Parliament, **the main focus of the EU's resilience approach must be the most vulnerable, poorest and most marginalised populations**, who have high exposure to risks. In the long term, this approach should address the deterioration of the ecosystem, particularly agriculture, water, biodiversity and fish resources.

Members called on the Commission to target fragile countries in its resilience agenda.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) as an essential component of resilience: Parliament highlighted that effective disaster response management takes into account the setting in place of a framework allowing for the immediate mobilisation of all necessary resources within the development and aid programmes. It called on the EU, its Member States and its partner countries' governments to improve and develop DRR strategies in developing countries **by implementing risk assessment programmes and enhancing early warning systems**, particularly in fragile and crisis-prone countries.

The EU and its Member States, as well as partner countries should consider:

- environmental sustainability and disaster risk management in programmes of land governance reform;
- climate change.

Coherence and complementarity between the Millenium Development Goals (MDG) and DRR should be ensured for the post-2015 framework;

Sustainable development, social protection and community resilience: Parliament encouraged increased attention to **small-scale** disasters as a key target in the resilience approach and enhanced visibility for the damage that small-scale disasters do. It underlined the need to strengthen and develop education in the context of disasters and emergencies, in relying on local authorities and civil society organisations.

Members also called for the regular collection of data, inter alia, meteorological data and data relating to harvest, livestock, the functioning of the markets, the nutritional condition of children and the poorest members of society, as well as data on existing DRR mechanisms …, in order to facilitate access to early warning measures.

Learning from food security crises and previous disasters: Parliament called on the EU to draw lessons from its cooperation policy in the past decades and to put forward proposals to promote Policy Coherence for Development in practice. It noted that food and nutrition crises are becoming more frequent in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions, where millions of people are without access to adequate food. It stressed that the underlying causes leading to food crises today are more complex than in the past, with poor people becoming more exposed to prices shocks.

Parliament noted that chronic food and nutrition insecurity is **the first and most important factor of vulnerability to food crises**, because it reduces people's capacity to prepare for risks, to withstand crises and to bounce back after them. The question of food security should be treated a resilience priority by eliminating unsustainable practices such as the dumping of agricultural products and unfair trade rules. Members noted that evidence from Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali indicates that low-cost agro-ecological techniques, particularly agro-forestry and soil and water conservation, have improved small-scale farmers' resilience to food insecurity. They called for **non-agricultural components** to be incorporated into agricultural interventions and for it to be ensured that improved nutrition is an explicit objective of agricultural programmes.

Policy Coherence for Development and food security: Parliament is of the view that the EU Action Plan for Resilience should aim at implementing Policy Coherence for Development and address issues relating to food security and climate resilience by eliminating unsustainable practices such as the **dumping of agricultural products and unfair trade rules**. It called on the EU to address sustainable agriculture in a holistic manner at national and international level.

The resolution called for an effective approach to resilience, which must be multi-institutional, coordinated, comprehensive and systematic, and include a number of elements such as the provision of predictable and targeted **social safety nets for the most vulnerable**, which would not only ensure that households have immediate access to food during crises, but also guarantee fast recovery and resilience to future shocks.

Parliament called for the **reduction of child undernutrition to be made central** to resilience through coordinated national plans prioritising in particular children under two and pregnant women.

Better coordination of efforts and improved funding methods: Parliament recalled that according to a study, EUR 800 million could be saved annually in transaction costs if donors concentrated their aid efforts on fewer countries and activities. In this respect, it underlined the importance of nomadic livestock keepers and pastoral populations for improving nutritional processes.

At the same time, the resolution encouraged increased collaboration between the public sector and the private sector on DRR and resilience. It urged the Commission to draft a proposal that establishes **rules on public-private partnership**, including social and ecological impact assessments, to prevent, for example, the exacerbation of **land-use conflicts or conflicts over access to water**, particularly to protect smallholder famers. It also recommended increased collaboration with non-EU countries and international and regional institutions when it comes to disaster preparedness, as well as disaster response and reconstruction.

Finally, Members emphasised that while the EU and international organisations can make progress on DRR and resilience in developing countries through their programmes, **it is primarily the responsibility of national governments to ensure the safety of their citizens**.

Partner countries therefore need to have a strong political commitment to supporting and implementing activities that enhance resilience and DRR.