Work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

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The Committee on Development adopted the own-initiative report by Charles GOERENS (ADLE, LU) on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. Members recalled the unique status of the ACP-EU JPA since it was the only multilateral interparliamentary assembly set up under an international agreement, the Cotonou Agreement.

An open dialogue: the committee welcomed the open, democratic and comprehensive dialogue between Members of the European Parliament and the parliamentarians from ACP countries on implementation of this Agreement, including scrutiny of development cooperation under the European Development Fund (EDF). It stressed the need to strengthen political dialogue, and the JPA's role in promoting and defending the principles of good governance.

Added value of JPA: Members underlined the added value of holding the JPA sessions in the EU Member States holding the EU Council Presidency by rotation. They deplored, however, the lack of interest shown by some EU Member States having held, or expected to hold in the future, the EU Council Presidency by rotation, in hosting the JPA sessions. They called on any EU Member State holding the EU Council Presidency by rotation to involve itself more deeply in the preparation, organisation and hosting of the JPA session;

Role of national parliaments: the committee stressed the crucial role of the ACP national parliaments, local authorities and non-state actors in the preparatory phases and monitoring of the Country and Regional Strategy Papers and the implementation of the EDF. It called on the Commission and the ACP governments to guarantee their involvement by supplying all available information to the parliaments of the ACP countries in good time, and **assisting them in exercising democratic scrutiny**, in particular by means of capacity building.

Deteriorating situation in certain countries of the ACP: Members reiterated their deepest concern at the deteriorating political and humanitarian situations in several ACP countries and regions, and called on the JPA to continue to monitor the situation in ACP countries in crisis, and to pay closer attention to situations of state fragility. The ACP and EU States were also asked **to fight in a coordinated fashion against the outbreak of the Ebola virus** in Western Africa.

Towards a more parliamentary JPA: the report welcomed the increasingly parliamentary – and hence political – nature of the JPA, together with the ever more active role played by its members and the greater quality of its debates, which were helping it make a vital contribution to the ACP-EU partnership. It called on the JPA to strengthen the dialogue on human rights in line with the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Cotonou Agreement, and to place this dialogue on its agendas as a recurring item. Members insisted that the European Parliament had a **political responsibility** to take into account the opinion of the ACP parliaments on the outcome of the negotiations on the EPAs before giving its assent.

Criminalisation of homosexuality: Members wanted the future agreement that would replace the Cotonou Agreement to include an explicit clause regarding **non-discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identit**y as demanded on many occasions by the European Parliament. They reiterated concern over the adoption and discussion of legislation further criminalising homosexuality in some ACP countries, and called on the JPA to place this on the agenda for its debates.

They also called for reinforcement of the principle of non-negotiable human rights clauses and sanctions for failure to respect such clauses, inter alia with regard to discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity and against people living with HIV/AIDS.

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD): Members considered that the post-Cotonou discussion should be an occasion to thoroughly analyse both the failure and the success of the current agreement in terms of the sustainable socio-economic development of ACP countries. Any future ACP-EU development and economic cooperation, as well as trade and investment arrangements, should ensure that no ACP country be left worse off.

The report called on the JPA bureau to appoint, within the JPA, two standing co-rapporteurs on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), to work closely with the European Parliament's PCD standing rapporteur, and to produce a biannual report on the implementation of Article 12 of the revised Cotonou Agreement.

Post 2015: the committee invited the EU-ACP JPA to develop a common approach in defining the future development framework after 2015. It encouraged the engagement of the JPA members in negotiations on the new Sustainable Development Goals. Members welcomed the successful regional meetings as provided for in the Cotonou Agreement and the JPA Rules of Procedure and acknowledged that these meetings made for a genuine exchange of views on regional issues, including conflict prevention and resolution, regional integration and cooperation, and the negotiations for the WTO-compatible EPAs (particularly the successful meetings in Nigeria, the Dominican Republic, Samoa and Zambia).

Lastly, they called on the states that had not yet done so to ratify the revised Cotonou Agreement.