EU Trust Fund for Africa: the implications for development and humanitarian aid

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The European Parliament adopted by 511 votes to 129, with 69 abstentions, a resolution on the EU Trust Fund for Africa: the implications for development and humanitarian aid.

Parliament recalled that the main goal of the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) is to help foster stability in the regions and contribute to better migration management. It aims to address the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration by promoting resilience, economic opportunities, equal opportunities, security and development.

Financial allocation and budgetary aspects: Parliament regretted the fact that to date Member States' contributions have remained too low, amounting only to a small fraction of the Union contribution and are thus far from reaching the official commitment, totalling only EUR 81.71 million in April 2016 (or 4.5 % of the projected EUR 1.8 billion). It called for fresh appropriations to be used wherever possible and for full transparency to be ensured as to the origin and destination of funds.

While welcoming the intention to disburse funds more quickly and flexibly in an emergency situation, **Parliament criticised the fact that the Commission has diverted appropriations from the objectives and principles of the basic acts to channel them through the EUTF**, as this is in breach of the financial rules, and furthermore jeopardises the success of long-term Union policies. It called, therefore, for fresh appropriations to be used wherever possible and for full transparency to be ensured as to the origin and destination of funds.

It noted that in the field of external action, EUTFs are mainly designed to enable a swift response to a specific emergency or post-emergency crisis by leveraging the contribution of EU Member States and other donors while increasing the global visibility of European efforts. In an amendment adopted in plenary, Parliament stressed the **volatility of voluntary contributions and urged the Member States to honour their pledges** and to rapidly and effectively match the Union contribution, in order to allow the EUTF to develop its full potential.

Members also deplored the fact that the trust funds result in **bypassing the budgetary authority and undermining the unity of the budget**.

It recalled that Member State contributions make up 85 % of the Union budget. However, the setting up the EUTF is *de facto* tantamount to revising the ceilings for the current MFF by increasing Member State contributions.

It stressed, therefore, that the creation of funding instruments outside the EU budget must remain exceptional. In addition, Parliament is not represented on the Strategic Board, despite the fact that substantial funds come from the Union budget.

Members observed that Parliament has demonstrated responsibility by agreeing to release emergency funds. They deplored the fact, however, that, as a result of the proliferation of emergency instruments, the Community method is being abandoned.

EDF contribution: Parliament noted that the EU’s financial allocation for the EUTF for Africa currently comes mainly from the 11th EDF because the EU budget and the MFF lack the resources and the

flexibility needed to address the different dimensions of such crises promptly and comprehensively. It called for the EU to agree to find a more holistic solution for emergency funding in the framework of this year's revision of the 2014-2020 MFF.

It condemned any use of EDF and ODA funds for migration management and control of **any other actions without development objectives.**

Parliament stressed that the use of the EDF to finance the EUTF for Africa may have an impact on the aid recipient African countries which are not covered by the Trust Fund, and in particular the least developed countries (LDCs). However, despite the already low levels of development assistance to LDCs which have declined for the second year in a row in 2014, it called on the Commission and the Member States, accordingly, to make sure that aid is not diverted away from the poorest countries to cover the cost of the current crises.

Role of the civil society, NGOs and local authorities: according to Members, local government authorities must be consulted as full partners as long as there are full guarantees of efficiency and good governance.

Parliament called for respect for the principle of subsidiarity and ownership also in this field of action and that local government bodies, local civil society, NGOs and international organisations should be strongly involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of the EUTF.

In this regard, Parliament called on the Commission to clarify and formalise the consultation procedures with these stakeholders so as to ensure their effective participation in the discussions.

Parliament strongly believes that the EUTF should focus not only on economic development but also on grassroots projects specifically aimed at improving quality, equity and universal accessibility of basic services.

Transparency and clarity for better achievement of goals: Parliament warned against the serious risk of misuse of EU development aid, in particular in conflict-affected countries where security, migration and development issues are closely interconnected. It emphasised strongly that the ultimate purpose of EU development policy must be the reduction and eradication of poverty. It also stressed that a clear, transparent, and communicable distinction must be made within the EUTF between the funding envelopes for development activities on the one hand, and those for activities related to migration management, border controls and all other activities on the other.

EU policy coherence and commitment on human rights: Parliament called for the EU to show greater coherence when acting in the field of international cooperation for development in the African region. It stated that the funds should reflect the principles of policy coherence for sustainable development and complementarity between all development stakeholders, and should avoid any contradiction between development aims and security, humanitarian and migration policies. The trust funds should contribute to achieving the long-term objectives of ensuring peace and strengthening governance in recipient countries.

Objectives and follow-up: Parliament called on the Commission to systematically monitor how the EUTF funds are employed and how they are allocated, and to increase Parliament's scrutiny powers over the EUTF. It deplored the lack of clarity and transparency regarding the funding criteria and the volume of funds available for civil society under the EUTF. It recalled the need for better communication between the Commission, the Member States and Parliament in programming and implementing actions of the EUTF in general, in the interests of the further planning of potential additional Trust Funds. It insisted on the need to guarantee, through detailed and regular reporting by the Commission, Parliament's scrutiny as

to how the Fund is being implemented. Transparency, communication and visibility are of the utmost importance with a view to disseminating the results and involving and sensitising European private actors, local and regional authorities, NGOs and civil society.

Funds and migration: Members recalled that EU migration policies should address the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration by promoting resilience, economic opportunities, equal opportunities, security and development by working more closely with third countries to **improve cooperation on incentives for return to and reintegration in the countries of origin of migrants.**

Parliament **s**tressed that instability and physical insecurity are prominent causes of forced displacement, and therefore supported a conflict-sensitive approach to implementation of the Fund that would **prioritise conflict prevention**, state-building, good governance and the promotion of the rule of law. It stated that the EUTF is a great opportunity for the EU, enabling it to reinforce its cooperation and political dialogue with its African partners, in particular concerning the effective implementation of return and readmission agreements.