Future of ACP-EU relations beyond 2020

2016/2053(INI) - 04/10/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 489 votes to 146, with 37 abstentions, a resolution on the future of ACP-EU relations beyond 2020.

Valuable and unique achievement: recalling the strength and acquis of the Cotonou Agreement, Members affirmed that ACP-EU cooperation is a valuable and unique achievement that has strengthened bonds between ACP and EU peoples and countries and their parliaments throughout the last 40 years.

In light of the ACP countries' demonstration of their commitment to taking joint action as a group, Parliament insisted that in order to improve the effectiveness of cooperation and adapt it to new challenges, a new structure must be adopted that:

- **maintains those parts of the ACP-EU acquis** that are universal in nature, such as a commitment to human rights and gender equality, human development, good governance and democracy, the objective of the rule of law, and exchange of best practice in a common framework;
- **provides that while the main work must be carried out in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity**, it must take place in regional agreements that are tailored to specific regional needs and to the mutual interests existing between the EU and the respective region.

Both the common framework and the regional agreements should be **legally binding** and be designed in a way that takes into account existing regional and sub-regional organisations, e.g. the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities.

Objectives, principles and terms of cooperation: Parliament stated that the following must be placed at the centre of a new agreement:

- the 2030 Agenda and the **Sustainable Development** Goals (SDGs) and respect for internationally agreed aid effectiveness principles;
- fight against, and ultimate eradication of, **poverty and inequalities;**
- **human rights**, democratic principles and the rule of law.

A new agreement must primarily be a **political project** based on the principle of ownership and clearly leave behind the donor-recipient mentality. Cooperation should take place in areas of **common interest where mutual gains can be expected**, not just in economic terms but also with regard to peace and security, human rights and the rule of law, good governance and democracy, migration, the environment, climate change.

Members also called for:

- an **ACP-EU peer monitoring**, accountability and review mechanism to scrutinise SDG implementation in Member States on a regular basis;
- **stronger involvement in political dialogue**, programming and implementation and support for capacity building by civil society, especially for local groups that are directly concerned by policies; **national parliaments** and regional and local authorities, both in ACP and EU countries, should participate more at all stages of ACP-EU policies and activities.

The **private sector** could play a pivotal role in the development process and could contribute to financing development, provided investment occurs with respect for the people, for traditional ownership or use, and

for the environment. Private investment should be supported under the auspices of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

Future ACP-EU institutions: Parliament stressed the following points:

- joint ACP-EU Council meetings should include **topical and urgent political debates, including on sensitive issues,** with the aim of adopting joint conclusions on them;
- the new cooperation agreement should include a strong **parliamentary dimension**, through a Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), ensuring the adequate democratic and proportional representation and participation of all political forces in its debates;
- the JPA should be aligned with the new regional structure, thus **focusing its work in regional fora on issues of regional importance**, strongly involving the national and regional parliaments;
- further efforts should be made to **improve JPA scrutiny** of development programming, bearing in mind the development effectiveness principles and follow-up to such scrutiny.

Future funding: Parliament is convinced that the simultaneous expiry of the Cotonou Agreement and of the Union's multiannual financial framework (MFF) provides an opportunity to finally decide on the **budgetisation of the European Development Fund**. However, this budgetisation should be conditioned by:

- **a guaranteed ring-fencing of developing funds** to maintain the level of financing for developing countries, and
- **a permanent and separate solution for EU financing of security expenses** that are linked to and in coherence with development cooperation.

Members stressed that EU development aid principles must be applied on an equal basis to all developing countries, and that advanced ACP countries must therefore graduate out of receiving EU development aid on the same terms as non-ACP countries.

Furthermore, a **higher degree of self-financing by the ACP countries** would be in line with the ACP ambitions to be an autonomous player, and the new agreement should include enhanced tools for building ACP countries' capacity to fund vital economic sectors.

Parliament noted the Commission communication of 7 June 2016 on establishing a new partnership framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration. It noted that the EU budget and the EDF contribution to the package of EUR 8 billion is exclusively composed of aid which was already planned. It called for development assistance to beneficiaries not to be jeopardised and for **migration-related initiatives** to be financed with fresh appropriations.

Trade dimension: Members reiterated that **Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)** constitute a basis for regional cooperation and that they must be instruments for development and regional integration. They called for a **post-Cotonou Agreement as a political umbrella agreement under which binding minimum requirements for EPAs are set**, in order to ensure continuity for EPA linkages in the existing Cotonou Agreement to sustainability provisions on good governance, respect for human rights, including among the most vulnerable people, and respect for social and environmental standards.

Lastly, Parliament called for a **joint parliamentary scrutiny and monitoring process** on the impact of the EPA as well as structured civil society monitoring mechanisms.