Revision of the European consensus on development

2016/2094(INI) - 14/02/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 539 votes to 71, with 83 abstentions, a resolution on the revision of the European Consensus on Development.

Parliament recalled the importance of the European Consensus on Development in providing a joint and coherent position at both EU and Member State level on the objectives, values, principles and main aspects of development policy. It recognised the importance of a clear European external strategy, which requires policy coherence, notably on peace and security, migration, trade, the environment and climate change, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation.

Members considered that the Consensus acquis must be safeguarded in particular the holistic vision of the fighting poverty and that tackling inequalities, as recognised in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), must also be a target.

In this regard, they proposed a series of recommendations which may be summarised as follows:

EU development objectives, values and principles: Parliament called for the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda and the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development to **cut across all internal as well as external EU policies** and to be put at the heart of the Consensus, recognising the important inter-linkages between its goals and targets. It called for the **fight against, and in the long term eradication of, poverty to remain the overarching and primary goal of EU development policy**, with a particular focus on the most marginalised groups.

Parliament stressed the importance of defining poverty in line with the definition of the Consensus and the Agenda for Change and within the framework of the Lisbon Treaty.

The resolution also called for specific EU development strategies to better target, protect and support vulnerable and marginalised groups such as women and children, LGTBI people.

Differentiation: Parliament underlined that, for an EU development strategy to be effective, the EU must promote a fair redistribution by developing countries of wealth **through national budgets**, i.e. within as well as between countries.

It considered, in this respect, that European development aid should first and foremost differentiate between individual countries' situations and development needs, and not on the basis of microeconomic indicators solely or political considerations.

It proposed a series of measures, *inter alia*, concerning middle income countries (MICs).

Development effectiveness: Parliament called for the EU and its Member States to recommit to the full implementation of the principles of effective development cooperation, namely **country ownership of development priorities**. It stressed the need to avoid overlaps and aid fragmentation and that **simplifying funding and bureaucratic procedures** can help in improving effectiveness. Effective measures are called for to **improve local governance**.

Women's rights: Parliament stressed that upholding the rights of women and girls, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights, and eliminating all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination, including harmful practices against children, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, are essential to realising human rights. It insisted on the need to guarantee universal access to affordable, comprehensive, high-quality information and education on sexual and reproductive health and family planning services.

It called for further actions in order to accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women by deepening multi-stakeholder partnerships, strengthening capacity for gender-responsive budgeting and planning and ensuring the participation of women's organisations.

Financing for development: Parliament recalled the EU's commitment to achieving the ODA target of 0.7 % of GNI by 2030. It stressed the importance of other countries, developed and emerging, also scaling up their ODA provision. It recognised that **general budget support** promotes national ownership, but underlined that it should only be considered when and **where the conditions are right** and effective control systems are in place.

Members also called on the EU and its Member States to support low- and middle-income countries in creating fair, progressive, transparent and efficient tax systems. The Union is invited to promote investments that generate decent employment.

Policy coherence for development: Parliament highlighted the importance of applying policy coherence for development (PCD) principles in all EU policies and that PCD should be a major element of the EU's strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Members proposed that an **arbitration system should** be established, under the authority of the President of the Commission, to bring about PCD and that in the event of divergences between the various policies of the Union, the President of the Commission should fully shoulder his political responsibility for the overall approach and have the task of deciding between them on the basis of the Union's PCD commitments.

They reiterated their call for the development of governance processes to promote **PCD at the global level** .

Trade and development: Parliament underlined the importance of properly regulated trade in promoting regional integration, contributing to sustainable growth and combating poverty. In this regard, it reiterated that a healthy environment, including a stable climate, is indispensable to poverty eradication.

It made another series of recommendations that strengthen the relationship between:

- security and development;
- humanitarian assistance.

Migration and development: Parliament stressed the central role of development cooperation in addressing the **root causes of forced migration** and displacement, such as state fragility, conflicts, insecurity and marginalisation, poverty, inequality and discrimination and human rights violations. It underlined that countries of origin and transit for migrants need tailor-made solutions for development that fit their respective political and socio-economic situations.

Humanitarian assistance: Parliament stressed the need for **closer links between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation** in order to address financing gaps, avoid overlaps and the creation of parallel systems. It called for the EU to fulfil its commitment to devote by 2020 at least **25 %**

of its humanitarian aid to local and national actors as directly as possible, as agreed in the Grand Bargain.

It recalled the fundamental principles of humanitarian aid:

- humanity,
- neutrality,
- independence and impartiality.

Members welcomed the Commission's tenacity in not merging the European Consensus on Development and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

EU development policy: lastly, Parliament recalled the comparative advantages offered by EU development action, including its global presence, the flexibility offered by its range of instruments and delivery methods. It stressed the need for EU comparative advantages to be translated into focused action on a certain number of policy areas outlined in the resolution.