Relations between the European Union and the ACP countries: options for a new partnership. Green Paper

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The rapporteur, Mr Wilfried MARTENS (PPE, B) supported the renewal and strengthening of ACP-EU cooperation and advocated a fifth Convention consisting essentially of a global agreement defining the political, economic, financial, commercial and social objectives and principles of cooperation on a uniform basis for all ACP countries. This agreement should incorporate single institutions to promote parliamentary and political dialogue and include a range of cooperation instruments tailored to the level of development of the ACP countries without, however, calling their identity or political history into question. With regard to trade, the committee supported the Commission option of differentiation within a single framework and called for the revision of the specific instruments used in ACP-EU cooperation (Stabex and Sysmin) with a view to ending the exclusive dependence of the ACP countries on a small number of basic products. It recommended increased support for scientific and technical research and the information society and proposed the establishment of a European foundation to provide long-term support for research laboratories in developing countries. It emphasized the importance of micro-credits in promoting the development of the popular economy and the private sector as well as the development of small businesses, cooperatives and craft industries. The committee retained the option of three financial envelopes (long-term, short-term and non-governmental operators) and included existing instruments in them. It asked that social criteria which improved the living and working conditions of the population be incorporated into the programmes and gave its support to budgetary and sectoral assistance in lieu of project aid. It asked that Structural Adjustment Programmes ensure that more rather than less support was given to basic social services. It also demanded that the ACP debt be decreased, rescheduled or cancelled and reiterated its call for the incorporation of the European Development Fund (EDF) into the EU budget.