NEPAD, the new partnership for Africa's development

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Jean-Pierre BEBEAR (EPP-ED, F) on NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which forms part of an ambitious project known as the 'African Renaissance'. NEPAD has been adopted as an operational programme of the African Union (AU) which replaced the OAU. It is based on the following priorities, which MEPs felt should constitute the major innovative features of development aid for Africa: taking control of development, peace and security through conflict prevention and resolution, human rights, democracy and good governance and accelerating regional integration. While welcoming the NEPAD initiative, the committee noted the criticisms from some quarters that African civil society had scarcely been involved. It therefore encouraged the AU Member States to allow the "active and democratic participation" of all sectors of civil society, including NGOs, trade unions, employers' organisations and churches. MEPs commended the AU on having made provision for a Pan-African Parliament and called for it to be established rapidly through the ratification by the African parliaments of the necessary protocol. They added that the role of providing the impetus for and exercising parliamentary control over NEPAD should naturally fall to the Pan-African Parliament. The committee also attached great importance to the implementation of the African Peer Group Mechanism (APRM), saying that this would help to realise NEPAD's basic political and economic principles by providing a framework for monitoring processes and for promoting responsible governance, democracy and respect for human rights and the rule of law. It urged all the countries of Africa to join the APRM and said that the EU should increase its development cooperation funding for countries which successfully participated in the Mechanism as a way of acknowledging their efforts. It also called on all the African countries to ratify the AU Convention against Corruption. The report also highlighted the need to support Africa's capacity to settle its own disputes and establish peace under the authority of the African Union. It congratulated the AU on its decision, the first of its kind, to send a military force to Burundi (the MIAB) to achieve peace in that country. MEPs added that the AU's conflict prevention policy should also combat structural causes, such as economic disparities, social injustice, absence of democratic participation in decision-making, environmental degradation, human rights violations and access to and control of natural resources. They also congratulated the Commission on its efforts to reduce the debt burden for the most heavily indebted countries and called for further measures in this direction. Lastly, the committee urged African countries to encourage and facilitate participation by the private sector and expressed support for an International Funding Facility to attract private finance to developing countries.