Population and development: 10 years on from the Cairo 1994 International Conference on population and development

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Karin JUNKER (PES, D) on population and development: ten years after the UN Conference in Cairo. The report called for a comprehensive overview of the progress made in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action to be published by the UN, EU governments and relevant NGOs to mark the 10th anniversary of the Cairo Conference. It pointed out that the target set by the Programme of Action was that all countries should strive to make reproductive healthcare services accessible to all individuals of appropriate age by 2015. It regretted that donor countries had contributed only 45% of the share of funds which they had undertaken to provide under the Cairo Programme, while the developing countries had contributed as much as 76% of their share. MEPs therefore called on the EU, its Member States and the accession countries to honour their Cairo commitments in full and urged the Commission to develop a framework agreement for the implementation of the Cairo objectives by 2015. The EU and its Member States were also urged to provide more funds for programmes in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights. MEPs said that, to achieve the Cairo objectives, the focus should be on education and information and on improving access to healthcare, contraception, sex education and medicinal products for the treatment of HIV/AIDs. They stressed that improved access for women to education, economic independence and decision-making processes was a precondition for development. The report also recommended that reproductive health protection be given high priority in the framework of ACP cooperation. The committee said that abortion must not be regarded as a family planning method, but called for legally and medically safe interventions to be possible for women who have no other way out of their difficulties. It pointed out that this would lead to a reduction in maternal mortality in developing countries, where 70 000 women die each year of botched abortions. MEPs were critical of the US Administration's "Mexico City policy", which withholds USAID funds from any foreign organisation which performs, refers, counsels or advocates for termination of pregnancy, regardless of whether termination is legal in that country. They therefore applauded the Commission's initiative compensating organisations active in the field of family planning and education for the loss of funding.