Budgetisation of the European Development Fund EDF

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Michel-Ange SCARBONCHI (EUL/NGL, F) on the budgetisation of the European Development Fund (EDF). MEPs repeated Parliament's longstanding demand, which had been consistently supported by the Commission, for the EDF to be brought within the EU budget rather than being funded by voluntary contributions from Member States, as at present. They pointed out that there had been difficult negotiations between Member States over recent contributions, leading to less generous increases than in the past, and that the forthcoming enlargement of the EU could exacerbate this problem. The Convention on the Future of Europe had also called for the budgetisation of the EDF. MEPs were also sharply critical of the lack of parliamentary accountability implicit in the fact that, under the present system, Parliament took no part in any aspect of decision-making over EDF funding levels, programming or allocation by country, region or sector, and that its powers were limited to an annual discharge. The committee called for the EDF to be integrated into the EU budget without compromising the existing cooperation and development policies and in such a way as to ensure complementarity with the current external programmes. It stressed that EDF funds would have to be ring-fenced, by creating an EDF sub-heading in the Financial Perspective, to prevent money being siphoned off to meet needs elsewhere or to address concerns responding more to the needs of donors than development, such as combating terrorism, money-laundering, illegal migration or the reconstruction of a non-ACP state. MEPs also pointed to the likelihood that a budgetised EDF would show a more even pattern of disbursement year-on-year than under the current system where levels of aid delivery build to a peak as each successive EDF comes on stream. Lastly, they stressed the importance of consulting ACP countries during discussions on EDF budgetisation and maintaining the current procedures which required agreement from ACP countries at every stage in setting political priorities and in implementing the EDFs.