Sustainable development: towards a global partnership

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PURPOSE: to present an EU initiative in the field of sustainable development within a global context.
CONTENT: the Goteborg European Council requested the Commission to consider the Union's contribution to global sustainable development and identify strategic components for a "Global Deal" at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Despite a number of initiatives in sustainable development since the 1992 Rio Conference, overall progress in this field remains slow. Whilst many developing countries have improved on their export and production capacity inequality between and within countries is on the increase. For example, in 1960, the income of the richest fifth of the world's population was 30 times larger than that of the poorest fifth: today it is 90 times higher. In addition to these figures, many natural resources, such as water, land and soil, biodiversity, forests and fish stock are being exploited at or beyond their limits, causing serious damage to the environment. In view of the above, the Paper suggests that to make globalisation more sustainable there is a need for a better balance between global market forces on the one hand and global governance on the other. Certainly, enhancing good governance throughout the developing and the developed world and at a global level appears to be an urgent priority. The Communication sets out what the EU contribution could be towards sustainable development, not just internally, but within the external field as well. It does so by considering the following points: 1) The need to address the phenomenon of globalisation. This to be achieved by prioritising the following actions: - Ensure that developing countries are integrated into the world economy; - Provide incentives for environmentally and socially sustainable production and trade; - Strengthen the international financial and monetary architecture through the promotion of better and more transparent forms of financial market regulation. 2) Fighting poverty and promoting social development. Under this heading the Communication proposes prioritising the following objectives: - Enhancing the quantity, quality, impact and sustainability of development co-operation through actions such as raising the level of investment in health in conjunction with other donor organisations. 3) The sustainable development of natural resources. Priority objectives listed here seek: - To arrest the loss of environmental resources by 2015; - To develop sectoral and intermediate objectives in sectors such as water, land and soil, energy and biodiversity. It proposes doing so through actions which include, for example, the launching in Johannesburg of an integrated river basin management initiative. 4) Improving the coherence of EU policies. Within this context the Commission proposes the following priority objectives: - Ensure that sustainable development is taken into account when preparing major policy proposals; - Adoption of policies such as energy and transport to take account of sustainable development within the global context. Action in this field would include, inter alia, a strengtheningof internal co-operation and co-ordination. 5) Better governance at all levels. Under this heading the Communication proposes that good governance at all levels should be maintained with external countries. This would be achieved through actions such as increased support for institution building and the fostering of civil society. 6) Financing sustainable development. Priority should be given to: - Reaching the UN target of 0.7% of GNI in Official Development Assistance; - Ensuring that the debt burden on developing countries is reduced in a consistent and effective manner; - Identifying effective means of delivering global public goods; and lastly - Stimulating a further increase in foreign private investment in developing countries. Concretely, this could be done through actions such as urging developed countries to make 0.7% of GNP as ODA.