Development cooperation, women participation: integration of gender issues

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OBJECTIVE: The present document deals with the need to take into account the differences existing between the roles of women and men in the context of development and shows how the efficacy of activities may be compromised as a result of the incorrect evaluation of these respective roles. It also defines the principles, objectives and means to be employed in order to solve this problem and sets out ways of strengthening consultation and coordination between the Community and the Member States in this area. CONTENT: The Commission document shows that fundamental differences exist between the ways in which men and women, respectively, contribute to economic and social progress in the developing countries. This role varies depending on region, income level, social group and family situation, and on whether the situation is urban or rural. The failure to pay sufficient attention to differences between the sexes results in a partial view of reality and detrimental effects on the results of development interventions. Frequently, development projects make the implicit assumption that their results will be equally beneficial to women and to men. That, however, is not the case. Quite the reverse: projects thus implemented often impose an excessive workload on women while men retain control over the outcome. It is for this reason that the Commission has listed four priority areas where development cooperation should take due account of the variable of differences between the sexes: - sustainable economic and social development, with a view to involving women more closely in the control of natural resources, - the campaign against poverty, since women are generally more greatly affected by poverty than men; - the integration of the developing countries into the world economy, so that the macroeconomic packages take much better account of women's contribution to development; - democracy and human rights, with a particular view to increasing women's participation in political, civil, economic and social life. With this in mind, the Commission proposes a series of media and strategies in the following areas: - In the formulation of development policies, it will be necessary to ensure an approach that takes account of the differences between the sexes, in particular through the creation of an appropriate institutional and legal environment, a more equitable division of responsibilities (home, workplace, etc.) and better allowance for sex-related issues in political negotiations with the developing countries. - In the implementation of development schemes, it will be necessary to attach priority to those which address the main disparities between men and women. The 'mainstreaming' approach and positive activities such as those envisaged at the strictly 'European' level should also be apparent in development schemes. At the level of the projects themselves, the question of the differences between the sexes should be taken into account at the project analysis stage and beneficiaries of these schemes should explicitly include women. Women will also be consulted as soon as the project is first conceived, and any evaluation will have to take due account of the specifically 'female' contribution made by the activity undertaken. - Increased capacity: consultations must take place at every level to make all participants in development aware of questions relating to differences between the sexes: governments, planning officials, NGOs, universities, research and training institutions, independent professionals. Aid to associations should attach priority to activities propitious to full participation by women. - Increased internal capacity: powers relating to equal opportunities must be established within development institutions. Specialists in the field would have to be appointed at the political level, in technical services and at operational level. It is particularly important that personnel working in the field should be made aware of equal opportunities issues and that new resources should be appropriated. Finally, the Commission proposes greater coordination between the Member States and the Community in this area: the main issue here is to increase the synergistic effects and efficacy of aid. To achieve this, it will be necessary: - to define principles and a consistent framework of action, - to ensure that the activities of the Community and the Member States comply with those principles, - and to ensure that communication is improved. In order to achieve improved coordination, additional human resources will be needed (particularly expert resources) and the tasks performed at all levels will have to be rationalised. The Commission, for its part, proposes that operational coordination

activities (activities in previously selected pilot countries) should be undertaken, to serve as tests before common strategies are laid down. Coordination activities with international bodies are also proposed (in particular with the OECD).