World Summit for social development (Copenhagen 1994): the European Union's follow-up

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OBJECTIVE: to define, in line with the priorities defended by the European Union at the World Summit on Social Development, a limited number of areas on which the Union could focus action in social matters, to meet the commitments made in Copenhagen in 1994. SUBSTANCE: among the themes referred to in the documents adopted in Copenhagen, 5 areas are to be given special attention by the Community and are covered by proposals for action guidelines and specific initiatives: - the international institutional environment: the Commission considers that closer cooperation is required with the ILO and other international institutions in order to discuss the impact of globalization of the economy, the interdependence of national policies, employment and respect for labour standards (in particular, IMF, World Bank and WTO); - basic social rights and promotion of economic and social development in bilateral agreements: given that the Community bases its external relations as a whole on respect for human rights and democracy, including economic, cultural and social rights, the Commission is proposing that dialogue with developing countries should cover these matters and, in particular, employment and respect for workers' basic rights. Opportunities for social cooperation should be envisaged with a view to promoting employment, health, education, etc.; fostering dialogue between governments and the social partners on issues relating to employment; implementing ILO conventions. The Commission also proposes, in line with the Summit's action programme, to allocate at least 20% of Community development aid to basic social programmes; - the fight against poverty: the idea would be that the fight against poverty would be routinely taken into account in the Community's relations with developing countries, using objective indicators. Alongside this, measures would be taken within the Community to reduce exclusion (in particular, under the European Social Fund and the Community 'employment' initiative); - priority to be given to employment in economic and social policies: given that the European Union has made employment its top priority (especially in the strategy put forward at Essen and the Confidence Pact), the Commission proposes comparing the ideas which have emerged from its contact with the social partners with those of the ILO and OECD by holding regular discussions; - respect and protection for immigrants and the fight against racism and xenophobia: the Commission plans to submit a recommendation encouraging Member States to ratify the United Nations' Convention on improving the lot of migrant workers and their families and to submit a recommendation calling on Member States to make it easier for residents from third countries legally domiciled in a Member State to find employment in another Member State (not possible at present). It also proposed that 1997 be designated as the 'European Year against Racism'. In addition, the Community intends to foster the involvement of civil society in the achievement of society's objectives. In this context, the Commission will hold a European forum to discuss social policy, bringing together as many relevant bodies as possible. Finally, it hopes to be able to hold expert meetings in 1997 and 1999 to examine how the Copenhagen action programme is being implemented, with a view to preparing the special session of the general assembly planned for 2000.