Research and technological development (RTD): cooperation with developing countries

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OBJECTIVE: The subject of this communication is the objectives of scientific cooperation with developing countries. In particular, it sets out the criteria and factors which should guide the scientific cooperation strategy to be adopted with the countries concerned and the general framework to be created to this end at Community level. SUBSTANCE: The Commission notes the insufficiency of research potential in developing countries taken as a whole (there are 0.5 researchers/R & D personnel per 10 000 of the active population in non-Asian developing countries, whereas the equivalent figure is 69 for the US and 40 for the EU). It considers means of improving the situation with the resources currently at the Community's disposal. The weakness of technological culture and, above all, the paucity of resources (based mostly on very low levels of public support) further accentuate the technological gap characterizing the developing countries. In this overall context, what can the Union do under its development aid strategy, and what means of action are open to it? Past experience shows that only a global approach based on an 'aid for science' (not a 'science transfer') model can ensure the coherence and effectiveness of development and research policies. In future, scientific research must be employed as a strategic means of aiding developing countries to bridge their technological and economic gap. A support strategy must be defined, based on the following principles and elements: 1) strategic principles: - the principle of partnership, which requires definition of the roles of those involved: . the public authorities in the developing countries should define and implement national policies tending to favour technological development, reforming the existing rules and readjusting financial planning. They should also act as RTD operators, concentrating on strategic research, the training of researchers and the encouragement of private /public interaction; . the EU donors should establish new priorities, on the basis of support for institutional reform, strengthening of scientific cooperation at regional, national and international level, and more systematic coordination of the EU's positions in the international forums concerned (the WHO, UNCTAD, the World Bank, etc); . civil society and the private sector (producers, knowledge users, etc) should take part in the establishment of priorities and the implementation of research actions (including financing); - the principle of differentiation: account must be taken of the diversity of the specific needs of the countries concerned; - the principle of an integrated approach for the resolution of specific problems: interdisciplinarity and association with civil society are becoming indispensable for the development of a genuinely effective strategy; 2) strategic elements: priority should be given to three areas: - the institutional aspect, via the definition of new legislative and regulatory policies; - research capacity (infrastructure and human resources); - orientation of scientific and technological cooperation towards the market (especially industry) in the interests of its profitability; 3) strategic instruments: two complementary instruments should be synchronized at Community level: - economic and technical cooperation actions, under the Lomé Convention, the MEDA programme and the regulations on relations with Asian and Latin American countries; - international scientific cooperation actions, under the fifth Community R & D framework programme. The Commission's objective is to bring about systematic reinforcement of the role of RTD in economic and social cooperation with developing countries via: . substantial financial aid for actions for institutional support for and development of universities; . application of RTD mainstreaming to all sectoral approaches to cooperation (this could result in 3 to 5% of appropriations being targeted on scientific and technological support actions). Scientific cooperation with developing countries should also be consolidated and diversified. The fifth framework programme should play a major role through the definition of thematic approaches in relation to the specific problems of the developing countries and in cooperation with the public authorities and civil society in the regions concerned; 4) areas of action: the main fields concerned by scientific research in the developing countries are the following: - public health; - demography and population, in relation to land use and urbanization; - energy; - information and communication (especially in relation to the development of the information society). In transverse terms, the Community intends to support the development of research institutes and

to encourage areas of technology with high industrial development potential. The Commission stresses the desirability of improving access to the fifth framework programme for the emerging economies, and of developing scientific cooperation to facilitate the access of EU undertakings to these high-growth markets. The Commission also insists that the Member States should coordinate more closely among themselves in this field, and stresses the need for genuine political dialogue in the sector with the countries and regions concerned.