Development cooperation: relations with ACP countries involved in armed conflicts

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PURPOSE : to define the outline of future cooperation with the ACP countries involved in armed conflicts, bringing together at the same time the development cooperation of the European Union and possibilities available under the CFSP. CONTENT : following the crisis in the Congo, the Commission announced that it was going to review its cooperation with the ACP countries presently at war against each other in order to avoid the misuse of funds for military purposes and to underscore the EU's appeal for a peaceful settlement of this conflict. This review exercise applies to all ongoing conflicts and military interventions in the ACP countries, notably in Africa where the number, scope and intensity of armed conflicts has been rising dramatically during the last years. This Communication describes the various measures and policy options available within the existing institutional and legal framework, in order to enable the EU to react to various conflict situations. It sets out instruments and strategic proposals, which might be used in the shaping of decisions, to be taken on a case-by-case basis by the competent authorities. A freezing, reduction or suspension of development aid as a reaction to the outbreak of armed conflict may occur under the following circumstance : 1) freezing or discontinuation of individual programmes if funds are, or can be, diverted to military activities or the provisions of weapons or military equipment; 2) suspension of aid under the 366a procedure of the Lomé Convention in case of serious violations of human rights as a consequence of armed conflicts; 3) sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council with direct suspension of aid imposed by the United Nations. In its Communication, the Commission pays attention to the permanent evaluation of the situation from the time of freezing or the suspension of aid so that the persons who are affected the most by these conflicts are not penalised. Thus, new programmes for countries involved in armed conflicts may be envisaged (structural adjustment support, food aid programmes, STABEX, SYSMIN) while waiting for normal cooperation to be resumed at the end of the conflict. As regards humanitarian aid, the Commission considers that it should not be subject to political objectives. Nonetheless, it has to be fully recognised that humanitarian aid may have unintended political effects, and that it can be exposed to political and even strategic manipulation. Its potential impact on the dynamics of conflict siuations should therefore be carefully assessed. Lastly, the Commission attracts attention to the new options for the Common Foreign and Security Policy. According to the Commission, the policy response of the European Union has to be flexible and adapted to the actual situationin each crisis region. General guidelines for a comprehensive EU policy approach towards armed conflicts, encompassing measures to be taken in the appropriate Community and CFSP instances, can be outlined for the following typical situations : 1) outbreak, escalation or extension of an armed conflict : the outbreak of hostilities leads in most cases to a partial or total discontinuation of development cooperation forsecurity reasons in the countries or areas directly affected by armed conflict. The continuation of cooperation programmes, either on a partial basis with regards to countries directly affected by hostilities, or to countries involved in armed conflict abroad, involves the risk of diversion of funds for belligerent purposes. Within the CFSP framework, the European Union should makefull use of available policy instruments (Presidency declarations, Common Positions, Joint Actions, Troika missions, the appointment of Special Envoys etc.) with the aim of persuading belligerents to seek negotiated solutions to their differences. In case of violations of the essential elements of the Lomé Convention, a partial or total suspension of aid should be set in motion to encourage a cessation of hostilities and political dialogue. In order to ensure a coherent approach and maximum impact of the EU's policy, the Member States should stop their bilateral aid at the same time as the Unions; 2) cessation of hostilities and negotiations : in the context of this senario, the CFSP response should support dialogue and negotiations and, if required, peacekeeping initiatives , with the appropriate instruments and Community measures (e.g. financial support or technical assistance for mediation or political dialogue). The Commission, as well as EU member states through bilateral cooperation, can offer technical and financial assistance for post-conflict activities in the socio-economic field (e.g. reconciliation initiatives, demobilisation, reintegration of

refugees and displaced people, rehabilitation). The European Union may also consider providing financial, technical, material or human resources for international peacekeeping operations; 3) breakdown of state authority : since the state authority is no longer respected (Somalia, Southern Sudan), the European Union can extend humanitarian aid and social sector assistance through UN agencies, international organisations and NGOs. In certain cases, the European Union may consider specific political and economic support to countries neighbouring "vanished states" which threaten regional security. Such support to "front lines states" should be contingent on the readiness of the beneficiary governments to respect human rights and democratic principles, and to ensure full transparency of military expenditures. In conclusion, the Commission draws attention to the fact that the urgency to react to political crises should not divert the attention of the European Union from the need to further strengthen efforts to contribute to the prevention of violent conflicts at an early stage by addressing their root caused in a targeted manner and with adequate combination of all available Community and CFSP instruments.