Partnership EU/ACP States: democratisation, rule of law, respect for human rights, good governance

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The resolution drafted by Fernando Fernández Martín (E, EPP) which broadly endorses the Commission Communication entitled "Democratisation, the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance: the challenges of the partnership between the European Union and the ACP States" was approved by the European Parliament. The report stresses that widespread corruption in certain ACP countries is eroding confidence in the State's ability to take effective action. In this context, it urges that the promotion of good governance, with particular reference to anti-corruption measures should be one of the essential features of the next ACP-EU Convention. The Parliament recalls its wish that the ACP countries themselves should be invited to propose criteria relating to the promotion of human rights, democratisation and good governance, including anti-corruption measures. In the context of this dialogue, it also stresses that particular attention should be paid to the protection of children's rights and demands specific initiatives relating to army, police and prison personnel. The report also stresses the importance of defending women's rights and assisting the independent media. In order to make progress in all of these areas, the Parliament describes the need for a deepening and broadening of cooperation, both between the EU and the ACP countries and within the ACP countries themselves and for this process of dialogue to be given an institutional status in the next ACP-EU Convention. It considers that, in the context of this dialogue, the role of the civil society is very important. The Parliament also considers that progress in cooperation policy in this area should form the subject of a major annual debate within the Joint Assembly. In the case of a serious infringement of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance, it proposes the appointment of rapporteurs (one from the EU and one from the ACP countries) to conduct inquiries and draw up a report for the ACP-EU Council of Ministers and to the ACP-EU Joint Assembly. The Parliament considers that the EU's positive approach should be enhanced by sanctions, as currently provided for in Article 366a of the Convention and judges it necessary that it should also be possible for sanctions to be imposed on its initiative. The Parliament proposes that every ACP country should have an independent national audit office to report to that country's government and parliament so that, where appropriate, the required action can be taken. In cooperation with the European Court of Auditors, this office should carry out checks on EU development funds to that country. The report proposes a set of specific, practical and uniform anti-corruption sanctions applied equally to all parties concerned to be contained in the next Convention, to be reinforced by a joint anti-corruption watchdog and enforcement mechanism. The Parliament lastly advises the Commission to avoid taking a bureacratic approach to its actions in this area and to involve NGOs in the process.