Activities of the ACP-EU Joint Assembly in 1997

1996/2250(INI) - 13/03/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Carlos ROBLES PIQUER (PPE, E) on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Assembly in 1997, Parliament noted the important contribution made by the Joint Assembly to the institutional framework of the Lomé Convention and to the North-South dialogue and called for the Joint Assembly to be institutionally independent. It renewed its call for the European Development Fund to be budgetized in order that genuine parliamentary control could be exercised in respect both of the allocation of its appropriations and of their implementation. It again expressed its wish that the Joint Assembly should be able to state its views during the negotiations on future EU-ACP links, which were to be held as part of the follow-up to the Green Paper on a new partnership (COS0497). Emphasizing the importance of the Joint Assembly as a democratically legitimated body in which the representatives of the ACP States and those of the European Parliament participated on equal terms, Parliament expressed the view that the Overseas Countries and Territories should be given the opportunity to take part, for example by granting them permanent observer status. Parliament noted the differences of opinion between the ACP States and the EU, which had become apparent in connection with certain motions for resolutions, proposed that the current voting system by separate colleges be abandoned, as it sometimes prevented the Assembly from adopting a position, and recommended the establishment of a single electoral college, whose members would vote together, without any distinction between ACP representatives and those of Parliament. It called for all development policy measures to include provision for environmental protection and restoration, particularly prevention of air and water pollution and measures for waste disposal, together with the promotion of environmentally acceptable renewable energy sources. Parliament considered it essential to anticipate the impact of climate change, such as the spread of desertification and drought, and in particular the threat of environmental catastrophe faced by small island states, which would require changes in lifestyle and an end to resource-squandering in the North. It reaffirmed that the strengthening of women's rights and their appropriate participation in all political decision-making processes was a fundamental requirement for successful progress with development policy. It welcomed the resolutions adopted by the Joint Assembly concerning the numerous conflicts and civil wars taking place on the continent of Africa. However, on the subject of democracy and respect for human rights, it regretted that the position adopted by the Joint Assembly at the Brussels session concerning the human rights violations perpetrated by the Nigerian Government had been called into question by the ACP countries in Lomé. It also deplored the fact that most ACP representatives had not seen fit to vote for the resolutions on Togo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It considered that the ACP partners must be made to understand much more clearly that Parliament viewed democracy and the rule of law as an essential precondition for peaceful coexistence and steady economic progress. It welcomed the signing of an international convention to ban anti-personnel mines, and hoped that ACP countries would restrict their national defence budgets to 1% of their GDP. Parliament considered that the choice of venue for the Joint Assembly made a statement regarding the regime concerned, and called on the ACP Assembly, therefore, to take full account of the principles of democracy and the rule of law when deciding on the choice of a venue. It suggested that the Commission should speed up its current project aimed at setting up a department to administer aid to third countries, including the ACP States.