Development cooperation: democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

1997/0191A(SYN) - 14/04/1999 - Text adopted by Parliament, 2nd reading

At second reading under cooperation procedure, the European Parliament adopted the recommendation by José Manuel Torres Couto (PSE,PT) on common position 15/99/EC adopted by the Council with a view to adopting a Council regulation laying down the requirements for the implementation of development cooperation operations which contribute to the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy and the rule of law and to that of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The recommendation amends the common position, notably, in the following areas: - adding to the scope of the proposed regulation the proper management of public affairs; - noting that human rights and democratic principles constitute the very foundations of European integration; - stating that, when responding to emergencies or situations of particular importance, the Community should seek to enhance the visibility of its commitment to human rights and democratic principles; - deleting provisions for a financial reference amount for the implementation of the regulation during the period 1999 to 2004 of EURO 260 million; - rewording the purpose of the regulation; - adding support for refugees and displaced persons and measures to combat racism to the scope of the regulation; - with regard to the operations to be supported, adding measures to combat sexism; - providing that Community support must be provided within the limits laid down each year by the budget authority; - setting out the responsibilities of the partners eligible for financing under the proposed regulation and providing that the Community shall take a particular interest in activities which encourage grassroots democracy; - providing that, where operations take the form of cooperation agreements between the Community and the beneficiary countries, those agreements shall lay down the conditions for the sustainability of the operations which are necessary to ensure their impact on progress in democracy and human rights and their continued effectiveness; - requiring the Commission to draw up an annual or multiannual programme for the operations to be carried out, ensuring the operations to be financed match the priorities set forth in the plan, on the basis of the appropriations available; - providing that the tendering procedures shall be modified to ensure equal opportunities for small-scale operators (small NGOs, local public administrators and agencies, etc.); - requiring that supplies shall be obtained taking account value for money and should preferably originate in the recipient country; - in the interests of consistency, complementarity and overall effectiveness, requiring that the Commission encourage the introduction of a system for the exchange and systematic analysis of information on planning and approval of operations, as well as the progress of those operations already approved, and that representatives of the European Parliament and the Council (as well as the Commission) in the recipient country should be involved in this information exchange; - requiring that encouragement by the Commission of the promotionof a coherent approach in relation to humanitarian assistance and, whenever possible, the integration of human rights protection within humanitarian assistance should be undertaken in close cooperation with the Member States; - requiring that the Commission's planning, appraisal, approval, administration, monitoring and evaluation of operations under the proposed regulation should be carried out in accordance with the procedures of the financial regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities; - requiring the Commission to lay down the conditions for the sustainability of operations and the conditions required in order to give a higher profile to their impact on democracy and human rights; - adding to decisions to be adopted by the Commission under the programme, decisions on operations to be carried out on extraordinary or urgent grounds; - modifying the provisions with regard to comitology by reinforcing the Commission's obligation to take account of the advisory committee's opinion, as well as the committee's public accountability; - requiring that these comitology provisions be adopted in accordance with the position of the European Parliament on a new act laying down the principles for European Union committees chaired by the Commission and the implementing powers of the Commission; - requiring the Commission to keep the

European Parliament fully informed of the committee's work; - requiring the Commission to inform the European Parliament of emergency measures; - requiring the Commission to take measures to establish a code of conduct for entities involved in operations under the terms of the regulation; - drawing up requirements for the minimum content of the Commission's annual report to the European Parliament and the Council; - requiring that this report be submitted to the European Parliament during the first quarter in order to give the Parliament time to examine and assess it before adoption of the Community budget; - requiring that the report shall be the subject of an annual debate in the European Parliament.